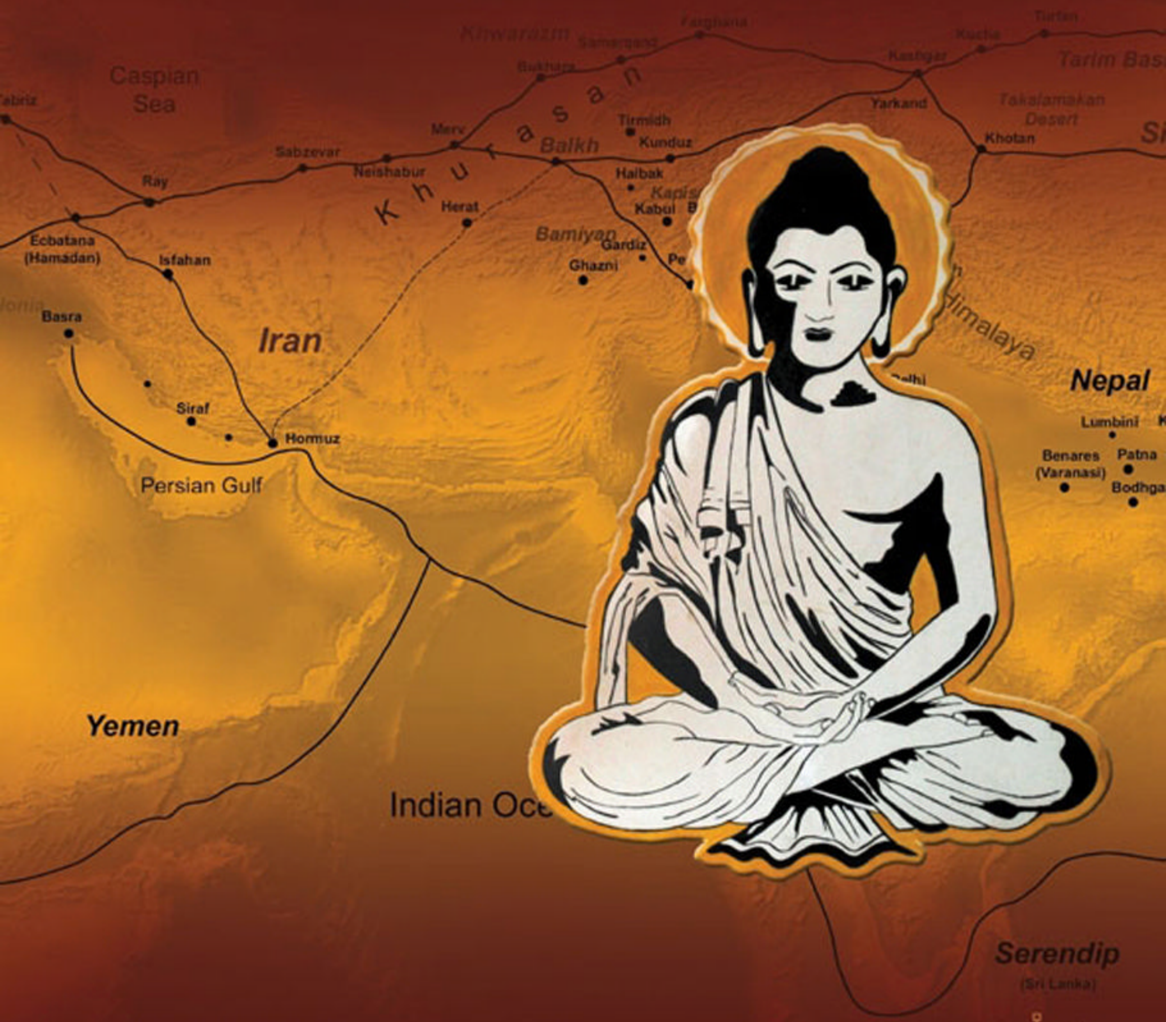
Buddhism in Iran

An Anthropological Approach to Traces and Influences



Mostafa Vaziri

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This book is dedicated to the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi,
whose humane, nonviolent, and democratic footsteps
continue to be guidelines for our future.

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Maps

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Foreword

The decision to delve deeply into the topic of historical Buddhism in connection with Iran was inspired by my own personal exposure to the Iranian and Buddhist worlds. It was prompted by the realization of how much Buddhist culture, apparently inconspicuously, has interacted with the cultural life in Iran, and along with that discovery came the wish to share this new perspective while also integrating previous works into a new outlook.

My interest in Buddhism began in 1990 with my first travels to some countries with Buddhist heritage, such as Japan, Thailand, and Nepal. In the late 1990s, after the completion of my studies in medicine in Austria, I relocated to Nepal to live and work as a volunteer medical doctor. During my four years of working in different rural locations in Nepal, I was further exposed to the Hindu-Buddhist world. After further travels in Ladakh, Kashmir, Sikkim, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Iran, and having worked as a medical doctor in Afghanistan for three-and-a-half years, I became even more inspired by a deeper realization that Iran, being in the cultural and geographical vicinity of the many medieval Buddhist regions, could not have remained unaffected by Buddhism. Having thought of that, it became more evident that geographically the eastern Iranian world has always shared borders with the Indian and Buddhist world in different time intervals. On a cultural level, I learned that Iranians and Buddhists have much more in common than we ever imagined, but that, as so often happens, linear versions of history had obscured this connection.

In the beginning of 2008, I was inspired to write a short introductory work but quickly the horizon broadened, and my research revealed to me a much deeper relationship between Buddhism and Iran. The task was not easy, given the circumstantial nature of the topic and the paucity of evidence. Thus, my decision was not to write an orientalist piece or a Buddhist narrative but an anthropological interpretation of cross-influences and interactions. I became even more inspired and immersed in the research of those scholars who had worked on the topic of Buddhism and India in connection with Iran.

It is true that the gaps between the Islamic and Buddhist worlds have been widened historically and culturally throughout centuries of separation between the two populations. There is little interest in either side to engage in serious dialogues and joint cultural and scholarly efforts. On a personal note, during the time I lived in Nepal, I learned firsthand of the cultural coldness between the Islamic and Buddhist (as well as the Hindu) worlds. While I was working in Nepal, some of my Hindu and Buddhist patients, upon hearing my first name, often asked my Nepali

colleagues if I came from a Muslim country. They invariably expressed amazement at the affirmative answer. I think deep down they were not necessarily interested in my religion, but in fact were questioning the historical as well as the cultural deadlock that has resulted in a lack of affinity and interactions between the Islamic countries and the Buddhist world for several centuries. Sometimes their disbelief heightened when they heard me speaking Nepali with patients and saw that I had eagerly come to know their country and learn their culture. Perhaps, in retrospect, I had gone there unconsciously hoping to get beyond the long-standing and considerable stereotyping between the Buddhist and Islamic societies and the cultural rifts between us as human beings.

The present book is aimed at triggering dialogues about cultural identities that are based on constructed historical clichés that are often accepted without questioning. The syncretism of modern Iranian culture is an assortment of hundreds of indigenous and foreign elements like many other national cultures around the world. Iran, in the course of its history, has not been alien to Buddhism, but has assimilated some of that culture. At the same time, Buddhism did not remain unaffected by influences from Iran.

Even though there is still a long way to go before we decipher all the elements of culture, we must at least start by rejecting the embarrassing and atrociously narrow labeling of other religious or ethnic communities by our ancestors and their dogmatic followers, as well as the belief that the victory and imposition of one faith or one group over another is the only way of rightful living. In light of new possibilities, perhaps some of us need to reinvent ourselves in order to better understand the human common denominators on the regional and global levels.

MOSTAFA VAZIRI,
Connecticut—Autumn, 2011

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In writing this book I have been fortunate to have received the assistance and attention of a number of wonderful individuals.

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In my constant relocation, I often needed articles and references inaccessible to me; Dr. Farhad Rostami, Jonathan Jancsary, and Maryam Shoja-Karimi deserve

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Finally, I am solely responsible for any inadequacies as well as the content of the arguments in this book.

Abbreviations of Journals

BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BSOS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*
IBIPS	*Iran: British Institute of Persian Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of American Oriental Society*
JRAS	*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

All other journals and periodicals in the notes and bibliography appear with full titles.

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Prologue: Goal of the Book and the Method

a. The Goal of the Book

The central goal of this book is to explore the interactions between the Buddhist world and the dominant cultures of Iran in pre- and post-Islamic times, beginning in the first century through at least the seventeenth century C.E. demonstrating the traces and cross-influences as well as the importance of parallel practices, a process that has brought the spiritual and material culture of Iran to its present state even after the term "Buddhism" was eradicated from the cultural language. In addition, the goal is to provide a new perspective on the history of Iran, not taking it at face value but assessing it against anthropological and comparative parameters. With the coming of Islam in the seventh and subsequently eighth centuries, the preexisting Buddhist elements in the Iranian world, which shared culture with Afghanistan and Central Asia, underwent substantial historical adaptation. At the same time, those Buddhist elements had an effect on the emerging Islamic culture.

Despite the scanty mention of Buddhism in Islamic or Iranian historical sources, the signature of Buddhism in certain areas of Iranian culture is hard to miss. However, the suggestion that Buddhist culture intermingled with the Iranian culture has not received much attention, and therefore documentation of the frequency of contact and interborrowings among the involved communities has remained marginalized in scholarship. This book hopes to stimulate new research on the neglected topic of Buddhism in Iran and the Islamic societies of the Middle East.

Due to fragmentary evidence and the scattered traces of Buddhism in Iran, the book follows a chronology from the earliest diffusion of Buddhism in the Iranian world in the first century C.E. while keeping in mind the most important themes in treating the physical and literary culture of Iran. The book is divided into four sections. The first section covers the Buddha's key philosophical concepts as a frame of reference to demonstrate the future infiltration of his teachings and legend in ascetic literatures in Iran as well as laying a textual foundation for the beginning of Buddhist enterprise. The second section covers the rise and spread of Buddhist culture in the first century and its cross-influences in Iranian religious domains including the emergence of the Buddhist-influenced Gnostic religion of Manichaeism in the third century C.E. and afterwards. The trajectory of cross-influences between

the Buddhist and Iranian worlds in ancient and medieval periods is multidimensional, covering areas of art, iconography, religious symbolism, literature, and asceticism. The open border of the eastern Iranian world in all parts of greater Khurāsān permitted the migration of the Buddhist missionaries and interactions with the dominant Buddhist culture of the area for almost one thousand years beginning with the rise of the Kushān dynasty in the first century C.E. The land and maritime trade routes, and geographical vicinity, made these cultural interactions between the Buddhists and the inhabitants of Iran possible. Mānī, the third-century C.E. prophet, and his later followers epitomize the results of such interactions with the Buddhist world, as shown by the development of his doctrine that absorbed many Buddhist ideas and practices in Iran and Central Asia.

The third section of the book deals with the traces that the Buddhist culture left in Iran after its demise in the eastern Iranian and Central Asian world after the tenth century. The traces under scrutiny in this section are found both in literary sources and in physical objects of culture. One such literary trace was the survival and transmission of the Buddha's life legend, *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* in the writings of Shiʿi authors in Iran. The chronology of its transmission will be examined, and a concise synopsis of the Buddha's life legend will also be paraphrased and commented upon. The connections with another Buddhist legend, *Vassantara Jātaka,* which also found its way into the Iranian ascetic literature, will be highlighted.

As for objects of culture, the tradition of venerating footprints or Persian *qadamgāh* in Iran will be examined and analyzed. A large number of carved *qadamgāhs* claimed to be the footprints of Shiʿi Imams or other holy Islamic figures in Iran are physical traces of the continuation and survival of Buddhism iconography and ritualism that are now identified in an Islamic context. Other traces such as rock-hewn caves in a number of regions in Iran exhibiting monastic characteristics are discussed in order to demonstrate the possibility that they were previously occupied by the Buddhist hermits. A chapter is also dedicated to tracing the roots of the word "Nawbahār," which had previously been used to signify Buddhist stūpa-monasteries, and is now currently the name of a number of villages and districts in Iran.

Parallel architectural and ceremonial rituals between Buddhist stūpas and Shiʿi or Sufi shrines will be scrutinized in order to identify aspects of Buddhist architecture and ritualism that were transmitted to the Iranian religious culture. Finally, in dealing with Buddhist traces in Iran, the thirteenth-century introduction of Buddhism to Iran by the Mongol rulers and the connection with the surviving section of the Buddha's life in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* will be highlighted and discussed. The circumstances of two prominent Sufi personalities, Simnānī and Hamadānī of the Mongol era, placed in the Buddhist cultural background of the time, feature the Sufi-Buddhist interactions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The fourth section entails the certain influences of Buddhism on a number of cultural and intellectual streams in Iran. One such stream that came under Buddhist cultural influence was the rise of asceticism in Khurāsān and eastern Iran in as early as the eighth century at the advent of Islam. One evident reason for this influence was geographical, since those regions were predominantly Buddhist before the Islamic conquest. It will be argued that the designation of "Sufism" for the early

ascetic movement in the eighth century for the eastern Iranian region was an anachronism in post-eleventh-century Islamic hagiography in an attempt to give a unified Islamic identity to all ascetic movements throughout the Islamic lands regardless of regional subcultures and the impetus behind each unique movement. This is followed by a section in chapter eight comparing Buddhist and early Muslim ascetic and Sufi practices.

The last chapter makes the surprising argument, supported by circumstantial and scholarly references, that certain Islamic philosophers and Sufi personalities had Buddhist associations. Among others, the life circumstances and ideas of Jābir ibn Hayyān (d. 815), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), and Mīr Fenderiskī (d. 1640) link them to Buddhism in one way or another. Finally, the appendix is an introduction of a crypto-Buddhist influence in the discourses of rationalism, nontheism, and nonviolence that were pursued, though nonsystematically, for centuries in Islamic Iran and its periphery.

This research is based on empirical investigation as well as fieldwork and observation. Primary and secondary sources are used in order to develop new avenues to perceive how, through intercultural communication and imitation, Iranian cultural and religious life was influenced by Buddhism throughout the centuries. It is also an anthropological demonstration of the closeness of spirituality, iconography, and art among Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and India.

B. THE METHOD

There has never been a "pure" culture in human history. The history of a given culture does not start at a particular point and time, but rather it is the continuation and reformulation of previous norms and practices. The generations of humanity have always interacted with one another through trade, invasion, and migration. The absorption, assimilation, and adoption of cultural or behavioral traits diffused by interacting communities, and even their resistance against one another, are all natural patterns that lead to newer versions of religions and cultures. Iran, as a large territory with a mosaic culture and ethnicity and extensive interactions with many communities, never in its tumultuous history stayed "pure." As much as Iran influenced other communities' architecture, dress, art, and so on, the same happened in the opposite direction as well.

Throughout the centuries, Zoroastrian and Islamic clerics have been obsessed with defending the purity of their divine religions, rejecting the idea of any external influences. This ignored the effect of interactions among the indigenous people of Iran and people of neighboring territories that naturally stimulated cultural exchange and creativity throughout the centuries. Islam, due to its conquering nature, could not remain intact in the face of already-established and powerful cultures and doctrines in conquered Alexandria all the way to Iran and Central Asia. Of course, the dynamic change began to take its course. The rise of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in the mid-eighth century promised to break away from the previously Umayyad Arab tribalism in order to create a greater multicultural civilization. Due to the tolerant attitude of at least the early ʿAbbāsid caliphs, such as al-Mansur, Hārun-al-Rashīd, and al-Ma'mun, libraries were soon filled with the translations of

pre-Islamic books, including Indian books, and scholars and philosophers emerged and brought in rationalist ideas and foreign cultures to the Islamic lands, which were soon to liberate Islam from its tribal and regional notions. Thus, the diffusion of external cultural and intellectual currents within the Islamic societies not only accommodated the new converts but also created a bed for Islam to take a syncretic direction and step out of its parochialism.

The syncretism or the synthesis of various religious and cultural elements thus opposes the idea of any "pure" religion or culture. There are, however, modern scholars who oppose the model of syncretism or even the vagueness of the term "influence" in scholarship.[1] Even if we avoid the terms "influence" or "syncretism," it does not change the fact that interactions of cultures would lead to the borrowings and adoptions of characteristics from one another's culture. It is true that interactions can lead to incorporation of outside elements to one's own system. For example, the interactions of Taoism and Buddhism in China left none of the rival doctrines immune from being influenced by the other.[2] As much as Zoroastrianism and Islam viewed Buddhism as a rival doctrine, their interactions with it in Central Asia and eastern Iran kept the dynamics of interborrowing alive for centuries of intermingling. Today, new perspectives and methods in anthropological research can lead us to modify our linear views and reach new conclusions.

Finding parallels, comparing, and tracing the cross-influences between the dominant cultural components in Iran and the Buddhist world have only been possible through historical investigation strengthened by anthropological consideration. Medieval historical narratives have not always provided adequate impartial, all-encompassing information to satisfy the needs of our generation as well as that of our intellectual circles. The slanted, limited, and at times religiously biased historical versions for the most part have avoided mentioning Buddhism and its role in Iran. Sometimes state-sponsored propaganda led to the biased historical versions: in this case the biases were usually against Manichaeism and Indian religions, considered pagan; biases against Zoroastrianism during the Islamic period were often ambiguous and mixed. This veiling in the historical records in fact did not change the reality on the ground. The familiarity of even the earliest Islamic thinkers such as al-Kindī (d. 873 C.E.) with the Indian and Buddhist wisdom cannot be denied.[3] The familiarity with and application of Indian sciences in the Islamic world were evident, and the mention of it was permissible and seemed not as problematic as acknowledging the Hindu-Buddhist influences on Islamic philosophy and spirituality. Through time, however, the Indian and Buddhist doctrines were perceived as a threat to Islam and were pushed out of mainstream Islamic intellectualism; at least they became rather unmentionable.

Empirical historical research cannot be based on the linearity of the course of events as reported by the medieval historians. More problematic in historiography is the fact that usually the vanquishers write history, not the vanquished. The medieval history books we have in our hands are not purely factual, but are rife with bias that we must stay aware of. Their linear historical records bring nothing fresh to our quest for a deeper understanding of the interactions of the people in the past. Thus, for our purposes we have turned to anthropology to unravel the Buddhist traces and influences left behind in the culture of Iran. By doing this we have been

able to reconstruct a narrative of Buddhism in the Iranian past and present cultural, literary, and spiritual life. Feasibly, for a more productive historical investigation the anthropological approach makes the narrative of a given culture more realistic. The Spanish Arabicist Julián Ribera (d. 1934) made use of the principles of acculturation, assimilation, imitation, adoption, and a behaviorist approach in interpreting Spanish history in the light of Islamic influences.[4] We can do the same in order to see how Iran was affected by Buddhism even though centuries have passed.

In strengthening the method of research, at other times, deeper results are produced when ideas and events are investigated even outside of their historical context. The old-fashioned narrative historicism encouraged by juxtaposing cause and effect in a specific historical context cannot always lead us to the sources of the ideas and events under scrutiny. Often the roots of ideas and events are connected to sources outside of a culture, language, or doctrine. To say the least, various human cultures and communities still live outside of time and global progress. Thus, sometimes the historical truth can reveal itself if we focus on the common denominators outside of historical and local circumstances. In other words, the historical circumstances in different cultures and different times can show common roots. Such similarities should be unveiled, as embodied in the works of the late Professor Toshihiko Izutsu, a linguist and an expert of Islamic mysticism as well as Buddhist, Taoist, and Vedantic philosophies. Izutsu maintained a critical approach to rigid academic historicism, and instead worked toward comparative philosophy and intracivilizational discourse in the service of a deeper understanding of the human past, deciphering the common denominators of cultures in a metahistorical framework.[5]

It is perhaps useful sometimes to take an atemporal approach to certain cultural investigations. A temporal historical perspective is more linear and tangible, has morphology, and is easier to defend. In contrast, taking a metahistorical or atemporal perspective to identify cultural and behavioral similarities between two or more cultures requires an acknowledgment of the unconscious production of the fundamentals of culture stemming from the experiences of cognition and reality.[6] Sometimes, the occurrence of simultaneous practices in different cultures is not based on or imitated because of what people read or on their awareness of other cultural practices, but is instead based on a collective unconscious of things happening on an unconscious level outside of their culture and outside of time. This indeed means that some of the parallels between Buddhism and practices in Iran may even lie outside of the historical context and be based on an unconscious behavior as much as there were real interactions between the two communities. The veneration of holy footprints and circumambulation around a shrine or stūpa are clear examples of both communities sharing similar cultural practices. Thus, proving the similarities between the Buddhist and Iranian cultural and spiritual practices can often be based on evidences that are unconscious and circumstantial.

In measuring and comparing Buddhism against the dominant cultural or religious characteristics in Iran, we are not dealing with the theological doctrines of Buddhism or Islamic religion per se, but preferably with the science and dynamism of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*).[7] It is always helpful to remember that *people* are the carriers of a cultural change, not religions. People build temples, people write and interpret books, and people show tolerance or rigidity; eventually people decide,

based on the socioeconomic and political circumstances, how to absorb, adapt, imitate, or resist outside influences. Cultures cannot lock themselves in and keep free from interactions with outside cultures. People who travel, new settlers, invaders, missionaries, scholars, and traders absorb and disseminate their learning and experiences from their own and other cultures and therefore become the agents of acculturation. Here, religions become subject to people's behavior. As much as the religious tenets appear fixed and unbending and seem to dictate to people how to behave, people govern the direction and the rate of change of the religion in their given cultures. For this reason, Islam and Buddhism vary from region to region or from culture to culture, and in fact they are sometimes fundamentally different from the same religion in a different place with a different history. The people of Iran thus geared their version of Islam toward a direction that has carried signs of syncretism and inclusiveness in regard to their previous cultural heritage and experiences.

Iran had been at the crossroads of where various religious traditions were competing, and at the same time had been blending into all of them. In the face of strong Zoroastrian and Islamic domination, Buddhism shrank to a marginal presence in the Iranian plateau; yet its influences, both in a concrete historical context as well as on an unconscious level, in the culture are undeniable.

The arguments in this research thus not only present a paradigm shift in our perception of how close Buddhism was to Iranian life, but also offer a means to reconsider our interpretation of Iranian culture and the common narrative of its history in favor of an anthropological and nondivisive approach. In the course of history, as time passed, Iranian knowledge about Buddhism and Hinduism or India in general remained rudimentary due to the past erroneous and biased stigma propagated in its culture. In contrast, the Indian knowledge of Zoroastrianism, Islam, Persian language, and Iran has only flourished in various centuries of interactions with the Iranian world. This book also hopes to stimulate an attitude of interest in regard to Buddhism and respect toward the religious culture of the Indian world. If Iran is to transcend its religious, cultural, and nationalistic limitations, the proponents of culture and intelligentsia must first reject prejudice and condescending labels against what in their eyes may not be considered purely Islamic or Iranian.

Finally, the approach of this book, as one colleague symbolically put it, is to give us a "new pair of glasses" through which one can view the past and present cultures as well as the physical life in Iran with less blurriness toward the hidden Buddhist dimensions in the background.

In former times, Khurāsān, Persis, Irāk, Mosul, the country up to the frontier of Syria, was Buddhistic, but then Zarathustra went forth from Adharbaijān and preached Magism in Balkh . . . in consequence, the Buddhists were banished from those countries, and had to emigrate to the countries east of Balkh.

Birunī (d. 1048) from *Alberuni's India*

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Part 1

The Beginning

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Buddha's Key Spiritual and Philosophical Concepts

This short chapter is an attempt to bring to light the key philosophical and spiritual teachings of the Buddha for the purpose of understanding how the power of his doctrine appealed to such a vast range of regions and peoples. In addition, this exploration will make it possible to understand Buddhism's relationships with and influences on neighboring cultures and their doctrines. These included Manichaeism, Islam, and Sufism in Iran, each of which experienced Buddhism in turn and in their proper historical and geographical contexts, often with surprising outcomes. In order to be able to recognize, compare, and contrast the influences that Buddhism ultimately had on these cultures and religions, we must have a strong and clear understanding of Buddhism's founding and philosophy.

The kind of world introduced by the Buddha was an impersonal one far from faith-based doctrine and the fluctuations of the mind. The Buddha invited his audience to focus on ways to liberate themselves from attachment to the mind and its nonstop habits. As much as his later dogmatic followers throughout the ages came to venerate and even worship the Buddha,[1] his teachings largely remained unchanged: he insisted that people's own actions or *karma*, not the Buddha, would determine the reality of their lives.

From the Islamic perspective, the doctrines of the Buddha did not fit the ancient Semitic biblical model of prophecy and religion. The emerging Muslim caliphates and their surrogate armies of the Saffārid and Ghaznavid dynasties in the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. considered the followers of the Buddha to be *kāfir* (unbelievers), or *bot-parast* (idol-worshippers), since they were not aligned with the "People of the Book," or the Abrahamic descendants (Jews, Christians, and Muslims). In addition, having no designation as a prophet of God would later affect Buddha's followers encountering Muslims.

In some historical Muslim writings, however, a number of persuasive writers identified the Buddha as a *nabī al-hindī* (Indian prophet), while other sources considered him to be the same as the fictional prophet Khidr.[2] But Muslims in general considered the assimilation of the Buddha and his followers to be controversial, and felt that Buddhism had to be either legitimized or abandoned altogether. Muslim opinions other than the in circles of philosophers and Sufis about the Buddha and Buddhism generally remained primitive and somewhat discriminatory.

It is important to bear in mind that the Buddha was not a prophet. He was not divinely inspired, and he did not receive any revelation of any sort from God or His angels. He did not claim to be in possession of special messages from some celestial source, and left no holy book behind. He established a nontheistic approach to solving the riddle of human suffering and confusion in the face of well-established and powerful Brahmanism. The *Buddha* was a term used in pre-Buddhist times meaning the *awakened one*; it was thus the name given to Siddharthā Gautāma Shakyamuni after his complete grasp of the human predicament at the age of 35. For practical purposes, let us briefly put Buddha's message in perspective.

The Search

Siddharthā was born around 563 B.C.E. to a royal Hindu family in present-day Lumbini, Nepal, on the Indian border. According to the stories that reconstruct his life, Siddharthā's first 29 years of princely life were full of gratification and learning without any experience of pain or difficulty. In order to begin his spiritual quest, he pressed his father to let him out of the palace so that he could see how ordinary people lived. The shock of seeing an old person, a sick person, a burning corpse, and a monk during his inquisitive strolls in town brought him to the threshold of awareness of the mundane nature of life. The phenomena of birth, aging, illness, decay, and death seemed to be happening without a clear indication of the source and meaning of this painful repetitive cycle. He wondered if all human beings end their lives in the difficulty of dealing with old age and eventual death, and what explanation there was for this confusing message of life.

The sight of a monk in town seemed to represent a clue, a path leading to the clarification of ancient human confusion and bafflement. He felt the need to search for an explanation and a solution to the tyranny of endless human disorientation. And so, one night, the young Siddharthā decided to discreetly leave the palace for the forest to join other yogis and masters in the hope of finding a solution. The meditation and other physical ascetic practices of the yogis brought temporary mental satisfaction, but the experience vanished once the meditation stopped, and the process had to be repeated again and again since it had no foothold in the mind. Siddharthā was searching for something fundamental, a type of knowledge that would have a lasting grip on the mind. He believed that some self-generating technique had to be established in the human psyche that would not need continuous external knowledge in order to assuage the restless mind. He was searching for lasting knowledge. As Chögyam Trungpa put it, he was searching for old knowledge that is like an old, established bakery that bakes fresh and hot bread every day.[3]

Ascetic hardships and meditation under different masters and yogis went on for six years with no long-lasting result, or at least not the kind of result that Siddharthā was in pursuit of. After six years, in the midst of living an extreme ascetic life, he heard a passing music instructor tell his student not to tune the string of his instrument too tight because it would break, and not too loose because it would not play. This statement created a moment of epiphany for Siddharthā. He broke his fast, shaved his head, and bathed; he did everything that alienated him from his fellow ascetic Hindu yogis, who like him were searching for an escape from human suffering. Siddharthā's decision to abandon self-mortification felt right, but it took him more weeks of meditation until finally, after a pivotal and decisive night under a tree known as the Bodhi Tree, Siddharthā fully understood. He defeated all the diabolical temptations and illusions of life (manifested by visions of evil and temptations, *māra*)[4] and reached *nīrvāna*,[5] putting out the flame of the confusing mind. He had found that that old knowledge was buried deep in his own mind. This psychological victory became a ground-breaking beginning with new awareness. Siddharthā was thus later named *the Buddha*, the enlightened or the awakened one. Following that crucial night under the Bodhi Tree and in the seven consecutive weeks that followed, the Buddha distilled his solution to human delusion and *dukka* (dissatisfaction) into four simple ideas, known as the "Four Noble Truths."

The Foundation of the Four Noble Truths

The Buddha noticed from people's beliefs and lifestyles that nothing had been learned from the long history of human delusion; people constantly but unknowingly put themselves into self-constructed anxious situations. It was a wonder to the Buddha why and how people of so many generations had preoccupied themselves with greed, hate, complex metaphysical ideas, and abstract religious imageries, inflicting upon themselves anxieties and fears of heaven, hell, and gods. The Buddha did not envision a new life with a different environment; instead, his entire approach was to change the direction of life by deconstructing the fossilized and hopeless conclusions of the mind in the present life, placing an anchor in the mind that would end the cycle of delusion in continuous birth and death or *samsāra*.[6]

The Buddha's intriguing investigation revealed a correlation between an unstable mind and the tendency to seek refuge in mysterious powers, a behavior quite prevalent in India. Besides ritual rites of supplication, self-mortification was also practiced out of a deep desire to become eternal and even survive postmortal retribution. The oscillation between the two religio-spiritual desires of being immortal and surviving postmortal retribution was something that the Buddha did not endorse.[7] In order to reform this spiritual distortion, he addressed issues that troubled the mind through its own fluctuations as well as its own constructed metaphysical anxiety that caused either fearing or depending on the powers and magic of a god or gods. The Buddha in following the footsteps of previous materialists of India attempted to demythologize the powerful concept of a human history colored by religious mythical stories, including the stories of creation, the might of gods, the state after death, and the enigma of heaven and hell. These metaphysical beliefs were passed down without anyone having any direct experience with them.[8] Even though the Brahmanical

imagery of hell eventually infiltrated Buddhism,[9] the Buddha personally expressed strong opposition to the imagery of the end of the world.[10] The renunciation of hidden mystery would release the mind to the extent that good and evil would no longer be transactions of the mind. The Buddha's famous statement to a monk in this regard was, "What is good has to be abandoned, as does what is evil."[11]

His doctrine laid the foundation for a nontheistic view as a means for individuals to free themselves from existential anxiety. The message was straightforward, so that no euphoric or mystical state or even metaphysical speculations were necessary to grasp what the Buddha introduced. He thus radically demystified the spiritual life and its dependence on metaphysics.[12] But the Buddha realized that a sudden freedom from an age-old religious consciousness without having something to substitute in its place could end dangerously in a spiritual vacuum. Having mastered human psychology, the Buddha preferred a subjective yet gradual exit[13] for average people from their habits and desires of mind and old-fashioned beliefs in celestial powers, because an immediate release from the old habits and their sources of belief could have a negative backlash. The Buddha even sensed a danger of "epistemological suicide," a sense of meaninglessness, and eventual psychophysical death.

Fundamentally, on the psychological level, the Buddha saw that the root cause of *dukka* or dissatisfaction lay in not realizing the transient nature of everything physical and mental, and instead being attached to something transient. He saw that what drove this attachment was the concept of self, where in fact he felt that nothing called "self" existed. For him, self was a combination of physical and mental characteristics. *Atman* (self) or what people thought of as self was also transient (*an-atman* or *anatta*), so again, the fact that people attach themselves to something that doesn't concretely exist, the composition of which is transient, led the Buddha to believe that delusion arising from attaching oneself to transient things, including oneself, gave rise to confusion and dissatisfaction.

On the questions of the permanency of the world and its origin, the Buddha was not like earlier Indian materialist and naturalist thinkers who opposed the conformist Brahmanical system. Such materialist thinkers held views that the primordial elements of air, fire, earth, and water are permanent and their derivatives are in the state of impermanence, and thus considered the former as real and the latter as unreal.[14] However, Nāgārjuna (between 150 and 250 C.E.),[15] the great Buddhist philosopher who reflected on the question of impermanency, clarified Buddha's nonself philosophy by expressing the view that a person is made out of water, air, earth, heat, space, and consciousness, and none of those has an essence of its own. Thus nonself or *śunyāta* (emptiness) is the dominant characteristic of everything, which is a fluid, formless, and nameless state of things. Nāgārjuna emphasized the Universe as being nonsubstantial, and proposed the emptiness of everything; therefore, in his view the enlightened ones have experienced the ultimate emptiness in the world of phenomena and in their consciousness.[16]

The Buddha developed his concept of "non-self," which he termed *dependent arising*. Dependent arising refers to a state of continuous becoming, based on the conditionality and flexibility of the nature of the world, a view of subjectivity and objectivity without merging into one extreme or another.[17] To the Buddha, dependent arising meant that neither the physical body nor the psychic components of the

mind are permanent or fixed, and therefore both are a state of depending on other phenomena that exist in and depend on time and space. The state of dependent arising is a verifiable state as it happens from moment to moment. This stimulating argument of the Buddha gave rise to another level of knowledge and awareness that could be called "becoming and has not become yet," or "things as they have become, not as they really are."[18] This allowed the mind space for creativity and flexibility in order to avoid absolutist logic and to avoid assuming that the forms are permanent.

In order to consolidate the foundation of his four noble truths, the Buddha presented a central threefold teaching consisting of three perennial concepts: all things are *annicca* (impermanent); *dukka* (unsatisfactoriness) is inherent in life; and there is an absence of substance in all phenomena, instead there is the *anatta* (nonself or nonsubstantiality). To understand the underlying notion of the nonsubstantiality and impermanence of all things in the entire theater of life, people would have to readjust their firm attachments to life and its contents. All emerging moments are precarious, as they immediately vanish. Without the full panoramic understanding of this process, one is doomed to be deluded. The Buddha spoke of the "historical present," which meant "existing with no implication of any relationship to the past."[19]

In order to alleviate the delusion and *dukka* or unsatisfactoriness of life, the Buddha proposed four ideas named "noble truths." Classical Buddhism defines the Four Noble Truths as: (1) the definition of *dukka* as a part of life, (2) the reasons for its arising, (3) the outcomes arising from cessation of *dukka*, and (4) the path to the cessation of *dukka*, which is action oriented. The Eightfold Path describes the action that needs to be taken.

The First and Second Noble Truths: The Nature of *Dukka*

The First Noble Truth declares that *dukka* is an inherent fact of existence. It is thus the responsibility of those who are dissatisfied to alleviate their own dissatisfaction. The Second Noble Truth declares that the human attachment to possessions and beliefs, whether terrestrial or celestial, has become the root of human suffering. These attachments and other deeply rooted anxieties first need to be perceived and acknowledged before an alternative is sought. Emotional obsession with one's physical possessions, whether individuals or objects, and attachment to one's intellectual views or religious beliefs all have become, in the Buddhist context, the true hindrance to living one's true nature.

In the Buddha's definition, the presence of attachment in the mind was a deep-rooted cause of disquiet. The Buddha saw *dukka* in three spheres: as pain, as change, and as condition. *Pain* is both physical and mental. *Change* is the psychology of a pleasure that would not last; it changes, it ends, and it would not have the same effect if it is repeated. Thus, the impermanency of the experience causes anguish and distress. The *condition* is inherent in our wishes that come and go with no end or cure to human cravings.[20]

In delineating the causes of *dukka*, the Buddha pointed out three mental poisons, categories that can described in different linguistic terms. These three poisons with their different forms are: (1) craving, desire, greed, thirst, grasping, attachment, and

chasing; (2) hatred, aggression, anger, depression, unforgiveness, and violence; (3) ignorance, confusion, delusion, and lack of self-knowledge. In traditional Buddhist paintings, *thankas,* these poisons are represented by three animals: a pig symbolizes greed; a snake represents anger; and a chicken stands for ignorance. If not dealt with, not surprisingly, the poisons eventually lead to an unsatisfactory and deluded life.

In his introduction of the first two Noble Truths the Buddha refused to accept religious or ascetic practices as a spiritual basis to alleviate *dukka*. He also suspended any postponement of freedom to the next world, that is, heaven, insisting that this world is an opportunity not to be missed. All future eschatological promises fall short when one is in pain and uneasy here in this world. He never favored self-convincing piety and disingenuous morality as a replacement for investigating the actual root of one's ignorance and suffering, but instead saw such mind-sets as spiritual deception and a mirage of conviction.

Despite his in-depth exploration, the complex roots of suffering could not all be expounded upon, nor could all philosophical matters be articulated with certainty. But generally the root cause of all unhappiness, according to the Buddha, was the craving or clinging. In regard to dealing with *dukka* there is an interesting transmission, or *sutra*, reporting that the Buddha was asked ten questions, which he left unexplained and thus undetermined: "1) Is the world eternal or 2) is it not eternal? 3) Is the world finite or 4) is it infinite? 5) Are the soul and the body one and the same thing or 6) is the soul one thing and the body another? 7) After death, does the Tathāgata (i.e. a Buddha or *arhat*) exist or 8) does he not exist or 9) does he both exist and not exist or 10) does he neither exist nor not exist?" In response, the Buddha replied, "It is not the case that one would live a spiritual life by virtue of holding the view that the world is eternal . . . or not eternal, or whether or not we would survive after death."[21] The Buddha in his practical (and nontheistic) mind refused to answer such questions, leaving them as open matters for one simple purpose: philosophical elaborations on such matters would not help the cessation of *dukka*, nor can anyone establish any direct experience with such philosophical topics. Despite his affinity for dialectical philosophy and respect for wisdom, the Buddha also set limits on knowledge and considered arbitrary speculations unprofitable for liberation.[22]

The Third Noble Truth: *Nīrvāna*

The Buddha coined the term *nīrvāna* (a compounded term never used before the Buddha's time[23]) to express this freedom from *samsāra*, the infinite cycle of birth and death. *Nīrvāna* literally means "extinguishing the flame." The symbolic flame or *dukka* it referred to was the personal flame of grasping, craving, hatred, jealousy, and ignorance—all the things that make human life challenging and psychologically painful. As soon as the flame is identified, calmed down, and eventually put out, all the bondages of anxiety and harmful sensations would disappear and the person might enjoy immediate benefits and experience lightness and happiness. The Buddha's *nīrvāna* went beyond his own personal search and satisfaction. His goal was to find a solution to suffering and the conditions for human freedom and quietness of the mind, which could be achieved on a larger scale in the generations to

follow. Furthermore, his teaching of liberation targeted not only human beings but also all sentient beings and all living nature.

Nīrvānic freedom was best described as a relinquishing of attachment and craving for the things that exist in unstable, impermanent conditions, by beginning to see things as they truly are. *Nīrvāna* was the twofold process of appeasement of the temptations stemming from the three poisons—greed, anger, and ignorance—followed by their slow elimination for the purpose of final freedom and maintenance of one's peaceful state. So not only was *nīrvāna* synonymous with happiness, but it became synonymous with the cessation of all cravings, including even the craving for eternal self and eternal existence (in an afterlife). Because the nature of coming and going in this life, *samsāra,* is infinite, the possession of such infinity, from the Buddhist point of view, is an opportunity to convert this infinite nihility to a meaningful *nīrvāna.*[24] Even though *nīrvāna* can translate to *śunyāta* (emptiness) of existence, it creates a sense of "nowness" in which one becomes united with time with a clear understanding of consciousness and history—a wisdom that goes beyond personal circumstances.[25]In other words, *nīrvāna* becomes a state of understanding of the nature of nonself, impermanency, and nowness within the context of time in the changing world, all of which should result in liberation from the empty phenomena of existence.

Nīrvāna was not the ultimate reality of things nor was it an ultimate state; it was a state of enlightenment with the awareness that knowledge of things would not be bound to absoluteness. In this state of understanding, an enlightened person would acknowledge and yet remain unaffected by all things that are by nature impermanent. Even clinging to joy and freedom was seen by the Buddha as something negative, since it would automatically produce its opposite and thus give rise to unhappiness. The Buddha argued that if self is not taken as the real owner of the world and its objects, this self will not generate any strong cravings or anxiety over what it perceives in the world.[26] All is therefore in the state of flux and nothing is permanent, and this is the basis of the nonself philosophy.

Regarding the attachment to the body, the Buddha could not reverse the natural processes of physical distress that have always tormented human beings, beginning with birth and continuing through illness, aging, decay, and death. Instead, he offered a new combination of knowledge and awareness to deal in a better manner with the impermanency of one's own existence. He changed the focus by lifting it away from the body and putting it instead on the practice of attending to the emerging moments at hand, without wasting thoughts on the future of the decaying physical body and its aftermath. In letting go of all grasping and attachments, including the attachment to life and rebirth, he spoke of his own experience of *nīrvāna* and death: "Knowledge and insight arose in me; unshakable is my freedom. This is my last birth; now there will be no future becoming."[27] In sum, the Buddha perceived that the thinking mind has separated human beings from the reality of nature, and thus mind and natural life tend to clash. The only lasting solution, although incompatible with the human craving for survival, was to exit the cycle of existence, *samsāra,* and the biological determinism that the human mind is trapped in.

To include and elaborate in his teachings the human behavior, the Buddha had to take into consideration the concept of *karma* (from a Sanskrit term *kr*, meaning

action or work).[28] According to the Buddha, action and the physical body were not the basis for reversing one's life from bad to good; rather, the mind was the source of all actions. The Buddha discussed the three poisons or bad *karmas* stemming from body, mouth, and mind: greed, anger, and ignorance.[29] At the same time he considered the arena of reversing these *karmas* as open and conditional and not deterministic. He took a radical approach to this question of the link between an action and its consequence in the future, seeing *karma* and rebirth as two interrelated phenomena that would both cease to exist at the time of enlightenment.[30] Obviously the nullification of *karma* depended on many factors such as personality, circumstances, and other fine aspects of mind and action. Nonetheless, later Buddhists strongly emphasized *karma* and rebirth, which has led modern scholars to debate the rational aspects of these concepts and speculate what Buddhism would look like without karmic theory.[31]

The integration of an understanding of impermanency, releasing the fear of death, eliminating the harmful content of the mind, which generates anxious impulses, rejecting the absoluteness of the nonmetaphysical self, and ending the cycle of *karma* and rebirth (*samsāra*) all became integral aspects of *nīrvāna*, the principle of the third Noble Truth.

The Fourth Noble Truth: The Middle Path

The Buddha's nontheistic approach to the matters of this world essentially took the liabilities and responsibilities away from any celestial powers and put them directly in the hands of individuals themselves as the main controllers of their own destiny. This required the cultivation of a stronger personality with the incentive of being virtuous and managing life in this given world. *Nīrvāna* was not the end result or to be mistaken for sainthood, but rather a precursor to carrying on in a state of grace and agility. An enlightened person should not block out the world and become dysfunctional; otherwise, "the enlightened man would have to be rescued. Someone would have to feed him and take him to the bathroom. We would have to have an enlightenment ward."[32] The experience of *nīrvāna* as introduced by the Buddha was a psychological adjustment and a test of perception using the mind to interpret the sensory experiences of the outside world with a full awareness of the same fluctuating mind. The mind is therefore the central point of transformation. To know one's mind, as the Buddha put it, is in itself enlightenment and attainment of freedom.

The Middle Path was a designation stemming from the Buddha's personal experiences. The term "middle" referred to taking the position between the two extremes of any behavior, whether maintaining views, taking actions, or even pursuing spiritual practices. The inspiration for the spiritual practice of the Middle Path is assumed to have come from the music teacher he overheard.

The Middle Path was intended by the Buddha to sum up the Eightfold Path. The eight fundamentals are not stages or levels of understanding in the course of time; they are a body of philosophical actions that cover behavior, thought, speech, and body to be put into practice simultaneously. They are: right view, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right exertion, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Eightfold Path thus provides an understanding of the

mind that now could reverse the *dukka* generated by the three poisons. In other words, greed transforms into nonattachment and noncraving, including not even craving for *nīrvāna* or enlightenment. Anger transforms into love and compassion for all sentient beings, and confusion and ignorance become clarity and wisdom.[33]

The first three Noble Truths became the basis of one's mind, and the Fourth Noble Truth became the means of daily improvisation based on emerging situations and experiences. Thus the Eightfold Path supplemented the concept of personhood or selfhood in social and moral realms, instead of drawing its practitioners into seclusion and isolation.

All eight components of the Middle Path are important, but the Eighth Noble component, namely, right concentration or meditation, became a practice that infiltrated other mystical and ascetic practices, including Sufism. The right concentration is to be practiced in conjunction with the Seventh Noble component, right mindfulness. Mindfulness is an awareness of one's body, feelings, thoughts, mind, and what one knows about the *dharma* or teachings of the Buddha.

The Eightfold Path encompasses four stages of meditation in search of a perfect harmony of the middle path, a harmony between human beings and the material world. It is also a practice to bring welfare to oneself and to others. The four stages of meditation are meditational powers, higher knowledge, insight, and formless attainments. To cultivate wisdom, there are two specific types of meditation: *samathā* (calm meditation) and *vipassanā* (insight meditation). Through calm meditation, one aims to bring the restless mind to ease and calm. In this preliminary technique one abandons huge judgments for the sake of smaller ones and abandons the gross for the sake of the subtle. By this, the attachment to the experience lessens and becomes more subtle but not eradicated.However, as Rupert Gethin further elaborates, insight meditation perceives all experiences and judgments as flawed because of the three principles of impermanency, nonself, and unsatisfactoriness. Thus, not only should one not replace the gross experience with a subtle one, but instead, experiences of the mind should be seen as unstable since they do not stem from the self, and ultimately they should be eradicated altogether. By this obliteration of all mental attachments to one's experiences and beliefs, one would have a sense of joy and therefore *nīrvāna* would become attainable.[34]

According to the teachings of the Buddha, all tools, including the cultivation of virtues, morality, the practice of meditation, and even his *dharma*, can be compared with a vehicle (*yanā*) or raft: once one reaches the opposite shore, the raft should not be carried on the shoulder all the time. In other words, "ultimately, as the simile of the raft indicates, attachment to even the teaching and practices of Buddhism must be relinquished."[35]

In the final analysis, the focus of the Buddha and the Buddhists on changing external circumstances in order to find relief gave way to changing the inner perception, seeing one's consciousness as a transitory by-product of external circumstances. As the Buddha said, it is the task of deconditioning the mind; the experience of *nīrvāna* therefore becomes the practice of nothing to be stored, just as the extinguished fire is not stored anywhere.[36] And the last words of the Buddha before his death, or final *nīrvāna*, were: "Decay is inherent in all things; be sure to strive with clarity of mind."[37]

Conclusion

The Buddha's teachings may seem to be the continuation of teachings by earlier Indian materialists who aimed to deconstruct the gullible religious thinking of his time in the fifth century B.C.E. The Buddha established a nontheistic doctrine under which individuals became the prime engines of their own destiny. His goal was to combine empiricism with morality. The Buddha gave the full responsibility to the individual for keeping out God and Satan by rendering them irrelevant to one's good and bad condition.[38] The focus of his teachings was on training the mind in order to perceive the mind and the world in a new and unique way. To discover and neutralize the temptations of the mind was also a goal to alleviate the perennial anxious craving. This was *nīrvāna*, the final liberation from the tyranny of the mind—eventually seeing things the way they are.

About 250 years after his death, the Buddha's teachings emerged from the obscurity of Indian asceticism and began to spread around the world. The spread of his message in ancient India, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka took place as early as the third century B.C.E. when the Mauryan king Aśoka converted to Buddhism. The zenith of Buddhism, however, was reached when the Kushān dynasty sponsored the development and spread of Buddhism in parts of present day Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, especially under King Kaniśka in the second century C.E. By then the Buddha's message had arrived at the Iranian doorstep. The firm establishment of Buddhism in Khurāsān and Central Asia beginning in the second century until the tenth century gradually brought the teachings of the Buddha to Iran, though not always directly. The rise of asceticism inspired by Buddhism in eastern Iran in the post-Islamic era around the eighth century and the transmission of the Buddha's spiritual life stories and legend in the Iranian religious literature, prose and poetry, and other allegorical pieces exposed the people of the Iranian plateau to the teachings of the Buddha in different contexts and on different levels. Even though the people of Iran have predominantly been followers of Zoroastrianism, and later Islam, as we will see they have unintentionally maintained a discrete place in their culture for the Buddha and the Buddhist ethos.

Part 2

The Early Interactions

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Chapter 2

The Early Spread and Influences of Buddhism in Iran

The fact that Buddhism influenced religious and cultural life in Iran is undeniable, but many of the traces of Buddhism in Iran were either eliminated or concealed by the competing religions of earlier Zoroastrianism (of the third through seventh centuries) and Islam that followed. In this chapter we provide a short account of Buddhist expansion, reconstructing and juxtaposing a series of interactions and cross-influences between the Iranian and the Buddhist worlds. The trajectory of cross-influences between Buddhism and the Iranian world covered a wide range of disciplines. Some of the areas where such intermingling can be noticed through fragmentary evidence are in the fields of art, iconography, architecture, religious and eschatological beliefs, mysticism, and literature.

The time range of contact between these two worlds began with India's Mauryan dynasty (322–185 B.C.E.). Interaction between the Iranian world and Buddhism involved direct contact in Khurāsān (which includes part of northern Afghanistan, northeastern Iran, and parts of Central Asia—often in scholarship Khurāsān, which partly lies in northern Afghanistan, is considered as part of the eastern Iranian world in the medieval times). In Iran, not only did the decentralized Parthian dynasty (247 B.C.E.—224 C.E.) make possible the expansion of Buddhism westward, but also a number of Parthian elites converted to Buddhism. The rise of the Kushān dynasty (ca. 80–375) and their adoption of Buddhism in the first century C.E. in modern-day Afghanistan and Khurāsān brought Buddhism to the doorstep of Iran and with an unimpeded free flow of exchange.

In Khurāsān during the cultural openness of the Kushān period, cross-influences, common languages, and legacies connected the Iranian and Buddhist cultures. The ancient and medieval contacts of the Iranian with the Buddhist world occurred through direct geographical proximity and Buddhist settlements in Iran, as well as indirectly through travel, missionary, trade, and migration. The Silk Route and other trade routes allowed the transporting of ideas and cultures by Buddhist settlers, missionaries, and

traders traveling through China, Turkistan, Central Asia, Khurāsān, and Iran. Could it be that the residues of Buddhist settlements of this pre-Islamic period are the many monastic caves, footprints, and obscure shrines that were left behind? It must have been during this culturally fluid period and not later.

It was only the later rise of the Sasanid dynasty (224–650 C.E.), with its preference for Zoroastrianism taking over in Iran and its western territories, that made the expansion of Buddhism westward more difficult. In an inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam, the reference to heretics specifically notes destroying the idols of Samanabrāhmana (Buddhists and Brahmans), which speaks of the Buddhist presence in Iran during the Sasanid dynasty.[1] Due to the antagonistic policies of Zorastrian Sasanids and later various Islamic dynasties, the Buddhist expansion then turned eastward, toward western China, Tibet, northern India, and Nepal. However, interactions between Buddhism and Iranian culture in a competitive cultural scene continued for the next 1300 years until the time when the three iconoclastic Islamic dynasties of Saffārid (861–1003 C.E.), Ghaznavid (963–1187 C.E.), and Seljūq (1037–1194 C.E.) essentially eradicated visible signs of Buddhism in Iran and its eastern periphery.

The Spread of Buddhism and Cross-Influences with the Iranian World

Buddhism was advocated during several consecutive dynasties: the Mauryan dynasty in India, the Parthian dynasty in greater Iran extended to Central Asia, and the Kushān dynasty in the Indo-Khurāsān regions. Despite the privileges this entailed, neither the Buddha nor the Buddhists had ever intended to enter politics in the first place, though both respected state jurisdiction and authority. Buddhism in the past "strongly discouraged any violent revolt against the kings, although there are *Jātaka* stories of the deposition of kings in extreme cases by popular risings. Nevertheless [this nonviolent doctrine] sought also to restrain the kings and convert them to the ideal of universal compassion."[2]

Buddhism, however, was able to spread more effectively when imperial powers supported and funded missionaries. Moreover, trade via land and sea with a greater participation of Buddhist merchants[3] than Brahmins also helped Buddhism spread in Iran and beyond, simply due to the absence of Buddhist dietary and hygiene prohibitions, as opposed to the strict rules that governed the lives and limited the mobility of the Brahmins. In addition to sea trade routes, the natural geography of Khurāsān, and the Silk Routes became major venues for the infiltration of Buddhism into the Iranian heartland. In fact, Khurāsān's geography allowed it to become connected to and share a common heritage with three important worlds: the Indian, the Sino-Turkish, and mainland Iran. In those regions, the interborrowing of cultural elements, population movements, and new settlements continued for centuries.

There had been claims that the awareness of Buddhism in Central Asia and Khurāsān began as early as the time of the Buddha himself. Some sources report that the Buddha personally visited Central Asian regions.[4] Even in Gandhāran art the Buddha is depicted together with two merchants from the Balkh region, in the northern part of present-day Afghanistan. This is a theme that is also reported

by the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Hsūan-tsang (or Xuanzang), in his travel account. The legend states that the two merchants of Balkh, while visiting India, had gone to Bodhgāya, where the Buddha had just attained enlightenment. They offered the Buddha cakes and honey from their provisions and became his disciples; they brought back Buddha's hair as a relic and built the first stūpa (Buddhist shrine) in Balkh.[5] However, there is no concrete evidence of these two merchants of Balkh ever having established Buddhism firmly in their homeland.[6] The legend of the two merchants could have easily been invented during the dominance of Buddhism in the Balkh region.

The first contact between Khurāsān and its neighbors and Buddhism can be dated back to the third century B.C.E., approximately three hundred years after the life of the historical Buddha. At that time the Mauryan dynasty in India, founded by Chandragupta, took power and pushed the Greeks out of the political scene. After Chandragupta joined the ascetic Jain order in southern India seeking enlightenment, his grandson, King Aśoka (264–227 B.C.E.), with no attachment to the caste system and out of repentance for his violent acts of war (especially after the battle and bloodshed in Kalinga), converted to Buddhism. King Aśoka thus committed himself to peaceful politics and ordered Buddha's *dharma* to be taken to distant lands via missionaries. Through this turn of events, Buddhism gained unprecedented historical momentum. Thus, the merging of the Achamenid dynasty's "Arameo-Iranian" linguistic choice and the Buddhist doctrine was the first instance of a historical link between the Iranian and Buddhist worlds at the time of Aśoka.[7]

Aśoka's kingdom is estimated to have contained parts of Khurāsān, the Hindu Kush, and Sistān areas.[8] Thus the Buddha's *dharma* (teachings) during Aśoka's time was spread to a number of regions. His missionaries reached as far as Yavana (Ionian region, Greece[9]), Serindia,[10] and other lands to the west, namely, Iran and its western neighbors.[11] Various sources refer to the knowledge of and potential encounters with Buddhism even in Palmyra of Syria, Judea, and Alexandria.[12] This claim is what perhaps led Birunī to also refer to the spread of Buddhism westward to Iran, Iraq, from Mosul all the way to Syria, a development that continued until the ascendancy of Zoroastrianism to power in the third century C.E., which led to the isolation of Buddhism in the empire.[13] Around 250 B.C.E., the Aśoka missionaries, led by Aśoka's son Mahindra, reached the island of Serendīp (earlier known as Ceylon, now Sri Lanka) where Buddhism has been firmly established ever since.

It was in the time of Aśoka that Buddhism was introduced to the Gandhāra region and Kashmir, and about two centuries later into Balkh, Eastern Turkistan (Khotan and Kāshgar—now in western China), Soghdiāna (present-day Tajikistan), and eastern Iran.[14] At least 39 of Aśoka's engraved pillars discovered thus far[15] testify that colonies of Buddhist missionaries planted the historical seed of Buddhism's consequential doctrine in those areas. He ordered the building of various *vihāras* (Buddhist monasteries) and the erection of as many as 84,000 *stūpas*,[16] some of which stood until the Islamic conquest in the seventh century. Aśoka gave Buddhism the status of a world doctrine not to be mistaken for a Hindu sect.[17]

The rise of Buddhism as a world-class doctrine under the Kushān dynasty (ca. 60–375 C.E.), especially under King Kaniśka (ca. 127–152 C.E.), happened

against the background of Buddhism already planted under King Aśoka (264–227 B.C.E.) and then by Menander (known in Indian sources as Milinda, 155–130 B.C.E.) in northwestern India and parts of Khurāsān. The Kushāns kept Khurāsān and India politically and culturally connected, as in Khurāsān, Shaivism (Śiva cult) and Buddhism appeared to coexist.[18] The success of the Kushāns was in fact due to their religious tolerance and assimilation of other ancient cults and religions including Mithraism and Zoroastrianism. The Kushāns assimilated various religious symbols and deities into the fabric of their empire and society, intermingling ancient Iranian and Indian traditions in Kushān art and their Buddhist writings. The Kushāns' cultural "cosmopolitanism" diffused a melding of the Indian art and culture with those of Khurāsān, while the dynasty's headquarters were maintained in Mathura and Peshawar (Pushapura).

Meanwhile, the Kushāns kept Gandhāra (which they called "Lotus Land") as their spiritual territory by building Buddhist centers there. The Gandhāran land under the Kushāns covered Udyāna (the Swat Valley) and Taxila[19] to the Kabul River, extending to the west bank of the Indus River (present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan). The Kushāns maintained their strongholds in other regions as well, while making their summer residence near Bagrām (north of Kabul).

The connection of the Iranian world with Buddhism is strengthened through geographical, linguistic, and cultural vicinity and intermingling. The ethnic and linguistic origins of the Kushāns are uncertain,[20] but they adopted the Bactrian language (written with the Greek alphabet), a Middle Iranian language that was mostly spoken in northern Khurāsān and Central Asia.[21] At the advent of the Kushān dynasty, who later adopted Bactrian language, other languages and cultures of Turkistan, especially from the Kāshgar and Khotan regions, were also accommodated within the broader linguistic culture of Buddhism. During this period, the Khotani language, Tokhāri, and Greek were used, while to the south of the Hindu Kush, Sanskrit, Prākrit (Middle Indic), and Kharushti (an old script used to write Sanskrit and Gandhāri languages) were used. This was the case until the Sasanid encroachment into western Kushān territories, a time when the Middle Persian language and Pahlavi script became prevalent.

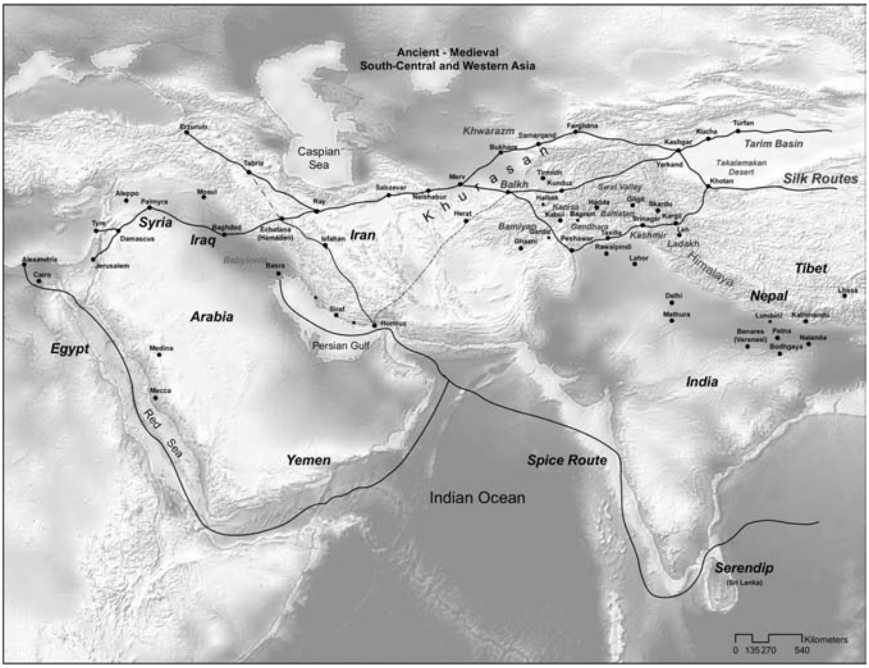
The Kushān king Kaniśka promoted Buddhism and brought about the zenith of intellectual and artistic Buddhism; he is sometimes considered the second Aśoka for his patronage of Buddhism. During this period, the systematic spread and propagation of Buddhism in Khurāsān was from south to north along the trade route. From the Gandhāra region, it spread to the east of Khurāsān, with its important center in Hadda (near present-day Jalālābād, Afghanistan), toward Bāmiyān, Balkh, and further north toward the Central Asian areas. The Kushāns ordered the building of many vihāras, stūpas, and Buddha statues, some of which have left traces. The old ruin found today on Tappe Kalān at Hadda was a vihāra called Nagara Vihāra.[22] At this great monastery the Buddha's skull, hair, and tooth relics were kept, which made this vihāra an important Buddhist pilgrimage site.[23] Hsūan-tsang, in his visit to the area, records that Buddhist pilgrims paid a gold coin to see the skull of the Buddha.[24] Hsūan-tsang recorded that Kaniśka had built a large Buddhist monastery near Bagrām,[25] which may have been called Shāh Bahār.[26] Hsūan-tsang also described the Kapiśa and Bagrām area where Mahāyāna Buddhism was practiced

as having around 100 Buddhist temples and more than 6,000 monks, as well as ten Hindu temples and more than 1,000 people of different religious confessions.[27] An earlier account around the year 400 C.E. by Fa-hien,[28] a Chinese pilgrim, reports that Hinayāna Buddhism had become prevalent in East Turkistan, Gandhāra, the Swat Valley, Balkh, Bāmīyān, and Iran.[29] He also reported that Bagrām in Kapiśa region maintained a Mahāyāna monastery on the caravan route connecting Peshawar to Balkh.[30] Hsūan-tsang reports the flourishing about 100 Buddhist vihāras in Balkh, which housed more than 3,000 Hinayāna Buddhist monks and contained beautifully sculpted Buddha statues draped with silk and adorned with ornaments.[31]

During the Kushān dynasty, Buddhism expanded northward via the trade route up to Tirmīdh, Soghdiāna, Kāshgar, Khotan, and the rest of Serindia.[32] Tirmīdh (Dharmamitra) became an important center of Buddhist learning, with ten monasteries, 1,000 monks, and a number of monastic caves, as reported by Hsūan-tsang.[33] Tirmīdh, Balkh, Samarqand, and Bukhārā all became important centers of Buddhism in the first millennium. Although Samarqand and Bukhārā did not have as many Buddhist monasteries or adherents as other centers in the region,[34] they played a role in transmitting Buddhism to the Tibetan regions. The spread of Buddhism to the north in Tukhāristān[35] (northeastern Khurāsān) led to further expansion via Parthia to China. Chinese sources refer to a number of scholars from the Iranian region such as the Parthian prince, known by his Chinese name, An-Shih-Kao, who stopped over in Tukhāristān for further Buddhist education before going on to China to translate Buddhist texts.[36]

For over three centuries, Kushāns shaped Buddhist philosophy, art, and literature in the eastern Iranian territories. The school of art that became known as Gandhāran art seemingly brought together Greek, Indian, western Iranian (Sasanid), and Khurāsānian indigenous elements together for the presentation of Buddhist ideas. It was the Gandhāra School that conceived the first anthropomorphic images and statues of the Buddha around the first century, contrary to common belief that such images arose out of mainland India, including the sitting Buddha in a meditation position. Various postures and presentations became icons, such as the Buddha's shoulders being covered by a monastic robe, curly hair drawn up to the top of his head, the Buddha having a halo and elongated ears, and standing with one hand raised or seated cross-legged.[37] Although the Buddha has also been depicted in a walking stance, showing his human manner and contact with the world, such worldly depiction was generally perceived to diminish his transcendental and godly image.[38]

The original inspiration in Gandhāran art for sculpting the image of the Buddha has been disputed, however, in modern scholarship.[39] Some prefer to call Gandhāran art "Greco-Buddhist," arguing that Greek elements were present in Indian art even before the advent of Buddhism.[40] Certain Indian scholars assert that the Gandhāra School is purely Indian with some Greek influences, and that the concept of the lotus as the seat of the Buddha is Indian in origin.[41] Some have argued, although with less acceptance, that the Buddha statues, stūpas, and art motifs of the Kushāns are more reminiscent of Persian Achaemenid and Sasanid motifs than Indian.[42] Despite the controversy about its origin, it is incontrovertible that the Buddha statue



Map 2.1 The Map of Ancient-Medieval South-Central-Western Asia

in different forms continued throughout the ages to stand as the Buddhist symbol, identity, and foundation of iconography, replacing the earlier Buddhist icons of the wheel of dharma and the Buddha's footprints. Furthermore, the Gandhāran Buddhist temple in Taxila is described by some as having shared much of its architectural style with ancient Iran, Syria, and even Egypt.[43]

One of the significant social, intellectual, and spiritual upheavals of the Kushān period in Khurāsān was the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The rise of the down-to-earth, accessible Mahāyāna Buddhism in Khurāsān was a reaction to the mainstream pedantic and hierarchical Buddhism. Thus Buddhism became accessible to the laity, who hardly engaged in textual and scholastic studies but preferred simple meditation and veneration of the relics as well as performing rituals around the stūpa. This flexibility gave the liberty to average individuals to independently attain liberation or enlightenment on a nonpriesthood scale.[44] In the region, Mahāyāna Buddhist scholarship picked up momentum with philosophers such as Vasubhandu and Aśanga. It was also during this period that works on the higher teachings of the Buddha such as *Abhidharma* and poetic literature came to predominate.[45]

The development of Mahāyāna Buddhism during the Kushān dynasty in Khurāsān and Central Asia led to the growth of the culture of functioning *bodhisattvas* (the enlightened buddhas who assist others), which was to spread to other lands.[46] A messianic evolution within Mahāyāna Buddhism gave rise to the notion of the future Buddha, *maitreya,* a heavenly *bodhisattva* who waits for the proper time to take his last rebirth as a human in order to bring liberation to those seeking

assistance in the world.[47] The source of this Buddhist notion of savior is uncertain, although speculation points to the neighboring traditions of Mithraism or Zoroastrianism in eastern Iran and Central Asia.[48] Although the messianic association between the two doctines is far-fetched, the Zoroastrian eschatological concept of *saoshyant* was certainly older than the Buddhist *maitreya*, and its apocalyptic symbol has been mentioned as the source of influence for the development of the *maitreya* concept.[49] Buddhists and Zoroastrians coexisted in eastern Iran, Khurāsān, and Central Asia, and their parallel developments may have stemmed from a natural intermingling, or the Buddhist concept may have arisen in reaction to the powerful and dominant Zoroastrianism. Because this link is somewhat speculative, it remains controversial.

If, however, the messianic concept of *maitreya* was in fact Iranian in origin,[50] then perhaps besides having a Zoroastrian origin, it may have also been impacted by Mithraism and the ancient Iranian doctrine of dualism, namely, Zurvanism.[51] The similarity of the name and function of the founder of a cult, Mithra, [52] to the word "maitreya" suggests a possible Iranian connection, but the phonetic similarity could be coincidental.[53] Besides the similarity of the words *mithra* and *maitreya*, another similar Pali term, *metteya*, with the same meaning, has also been mentioned in this phonetic connection, which throws more uncertainty back into the question of the source of a savior concept in Buddhism.[54]

The application of such Buddhist concepts to two ancient Iranian personalities who took on the designations of *bodhisattva* and *maitreya* in their missions is interesting to affirm. The first who was given the title bodhisattva was a Parthian prince who left his kingdom to his uncle in favor of entering a monastic life, studying and translating Buddhist texts and *sutras* on the topic of meditation into Chinese.[55] The second who was titled a *maitreya* was the prophet Mānī in the third century C.E. Many Iranian-Buddhist connections can be found in the Manichaean world, a subject that we will explore further in the next chapter. Here it suffices to say that in Manichaean sources, the Buddha was noted as the forerunner of Mānī. Mānī was perceived to be *maitreya*, the "Messenger of Light," or "the Buddha of Light" symbolizing the final enlightenment or *buddhahood*.[56] The Buddhist idea of maitreya was given a fresh interpretation, identifying Mānī as the "divine twin" of the Buddha, "God Buddha," or even in certain Manichaean hymns, "Buddha Mānī."[57] These associations between the Iranian and Buddhist worlds seem to further point to a deeper involvement of these two communities and the usage of the notions of *bodhisattva* and *maitreya*.

Furthermore, as much as the idea of *maitreya* and its iconography suggest an Iranian and Central Asian origin, the Indian influences on Buddhist iconography in Central Asia that had begun as early as 200 B.C.E should not be ignored.[58] Many archeological finds in Khurāsān include images of the Buddha, *bodhisattva,* and *maitreya*. Hundreds of rock-cut Buddhist sanctuaries show the influence of the practices of the earlier Sasanids on the Buddhists. Cave paintings of the Iranian deities of the Sun and Moon are found in Fondukistān, and moreover, Kushān coins depict Zoroastrian deities.[59] These are indications that Buddhism and the dominant Iranian world exchanged art motifs, terminologies, deities, customs, and iconic figures.[60] Cultural and artistic intermingling between Buddhism and the Iranian,

Central Asian, and Indian religions and art represented the open border among these worlds.[61] Examples abound: elements of the life story of the Buddha—his birth, enlightenment, first sermon in Deer Park in Śarnath, and *parinīrvāna* (final passing away)—were all depicted in paintings for the first time in the Indo-Afghan region and Khurāsān.[62]

Another Iranian connection is the legendary Bodhidharma, credited with bringing new meditational techniques to China in 520 C.E. Founding Chan (Zen) Buddhism in China, Bodhidharma is believed to have come from the Iranized areas of Central Asia;[63] either Soghdīana or Khotan. This account undoubtedly conflicts with the common belief that Bodhidharma had come from India, the land of the Buddha.[64] The assertion that many missionaries and masters, including Bodhidharma, relocated to China can make sense especially in the sixth century C.E. at a time when Buddhism was firmly established in Central Asia and was expanding eastward toward China and Tibet. In this connection it has been said that the idea of the *bodhisattva* was passed on to China via Khotan rather than India.[65]

On a different level, the fusion of artistic schemes between Zoroastrianism and Buddhism in Khurāsān and Central Asia, however, offers more than just coincidental similarities. The painting of the Buddha found in Kara Tappe in old Tirmīdh with godly attributes of flames shooting out of his shoulders, or haloes of fire with the inscription of "Buddha-Mazda," seems to indicate such fusion, a product of the Kushān period.[66] The adoption of the Zoroastrians' *Ahura Mazda* (Wise Lord) seemed to be an honorific designation when the Buddhists of Central Asia applied the term "Mazda" (wise) to their lord the Buddha: "Buddha-Mazda," the *Wise Buddha*.[67] Moreover, a stele of Buddha from the second century C.E. belonging to the Gandhāran art of the Kushān period shows a halo behind him, which was characteristic of Ahura Mazda in the Zoroastrian pantheon.[68] The art motif of light or flame as a means of removing ignorance or impurity has been argued to be an Iranian influence on Buddhist art and not necessarily Indian.[69] However, it has been suggested that the use of flame or light to symbolize the supreme knowledge and luminous nature of divinity is also found in the Indian religious traditions.[70] Some art motifs seemingly from Iranian sources such as the sun, moon, and flame used for the Buddha's iconography had already been exploited in Hindu iconography.[71] Some of these cross-cultural similarities make it difficult to be precise about the original source of influence.

As further evidence of iconographic intermingling, in Buddhist vihāras many paintings exhibit shared Iranian-Buddhist iconography. For example, the two Iranian deities solar *mithra* and lunar *mao* are shown in submission to the Buddha.[72] Besides cross-influences manifesting during the Kushan period, Sasanid influences on Buddhist art can also be found. Some images of the Buddha and *bodhisattva* found in Khotan suggest Sasanid-style dress, with headband, black beard, and curly moustache having been branded an Iranian influence.[73] Similar Sasanid imports can be seen in Tibetan iconography of the *bodhisattva's* clothing, local kings' crown and ornaments as well as those of the high aristocracy.[74] The Sasanid influence on certain Buddhist art and architecture is equally distinguished in Bāmiyān with the portrayal of the *maitreya* and *bodhisattva* with

a Sasanid-style crown of the sixth century.[75] The similarities between Sasanid rock-cut temples or the Buddha statues (i.e., the twin statues of Bāmiyān belonging to the sixth century) may be another example of cross-influence between the Iranian and the Buddhist worlds.[76] The Sasanid-Buddhist art and imagery can also be observed in the remains of the wall paintings of Kuh-e Khwaja in Sistān's complex near Hamoun Lake, where the Central Asian and Khurāsānian Buddhist architecture merged and were complemented with Sasanid-style imagery.[77] This complex seemed to have been a Zoroastrian pilgrimage site during Parthian and even in Sasanid times, and therefore the scholarly hypothesis that it was previously a Buddhist temple has been rejected.[78]

In the Sasanid stronghold of Mesopotamia, it is also interesting to note the discovery of a Gandhāran-style statue of Śiva in Kūkhah (or Kūhah), which points to the cultural relationship between the Sasanids and the Hindu-Buddhist world.[79] Despite the lack of evidence of a Shaivism in Mesopotamia, the Gandhāran art of the Kushāns had found its way to the westernmost territories of the Sasanid Empire.

In their interactions on an intellectual level, ironically, given their exclusive Zoroastrian cultural policy, the Sasanids showed a great interest in Indian sciences and literature, which included Buddhism. Under the patronage of Nūshirvān, the Sasanid physician Burzūya brought enough material from India for his composition of *Kelila va Dimna* in Middle Persian in 570 C.E. Apart from the five chapters of *Kelila va Dimna* that correspond to the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* (an ancient collection of animal fables), and some chapters from the Indian epic of *Mahābhārata*, the rest came from Buddha's birth stories or *jātakas*.[80]

India became known as the land where the fables were told with the language of talking animals. In the early Islamic period, *Kelila va Dimna* was translated from Middle Persian into Arabic and later into Persian. The translation of this Sasanid literary work seems to have influenced Persian literature and miniature painting such that animals became the dominant characters, which was an already-established style of literature in Buddhism. Certainly, many of the Kushān Buddhist *jātakas* were passed on not only to the Sasanid literary culture but to the writers and artists of the Islamic period as well. In one of the Kushān *jātakas*, the bird illustrations represent a story among which *Sīmurgh* (the phoenix), the king of the birds, appeared along with the owl and other smaller fowls,[81]a theme that appears in the literary work of 'Attār (d. 1220) and the miniature work of later periods. The thirteenth-century Rumī's usage of animal and bird symbols to convey a certain message in his poetry follows the example of *Kelila va Dimna* and Buddhist *jātakas*.[82] In fact Rumī's *Masnavī*, along with its Koranic and prophetic themes, contains nearly 60 Indian tales extracted from the Buddhist legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef*, as well as the *Sindbād Nāmeh* and *Kelila va Dimna,* (also remarkable is the Persian *Tutī Nāmeh* or *Chehel Tutī*, which was derived entirely from the Buddhist sources and circulated in Sufi anecdotal culture).[83] Thus, it is fair to say that despite the antagonism of Zoroastrianism and in the later period Islam against Buddhism, on an intellectual and cultural level the exchanges and cross-influences remained unimpeded.

In exploring Buddhist cultural exchanges, another level of interaction was that between Iran and Tibet, where there seems to have been several important connections. Even though the Sasanid Empire of Iran did not directly share a border with

Tibet, the connection and transmission between Iran and Tibet emerged from two channels: first, the Tibetan domination of certain Central Asian regions, that is, Ladakh and neighboring Kashmir, Gilgit, and Badakhshan, and second, through the contact of Tibet in the medieval era with the Uighur kingdom in Turkistan, primarily a Manichaean area that remained culturally connected to the Iranian world.[84]

The Tibetan "Buddhist" eschatology formulated in the well-known *Tibetan Book of the Dead* contains not only Indian Buddhist conceptions but also Iranian non-Buddhist eschatological ideas. For instance, the concepts of an intermediate existence of 49 days between two lives and a dead person's consciousness wandering for 49 days in a state of *bardo* as described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* are crucially not Buddhist in origin.[85] This influence, like several others, arose because Buddhism had encountered the Iranian world in Khurāsān and Central Asia before making its way to Tibet in the seventh century. Moreover, the ideas from Iranian Zurvanism of "infinite life" or "infinite time" seem to have influenced the Tibetan book of genesis.[86]

In another Tibetan eschatological belief, there is mention of the *Chinvat Bridge* into the next world. The purpose of the *Chinvat Bridge* in Tibetan had been described as that which helps in crossing over a river through purgatory toward Paradise—an echo of ancient Iranian religious belief.[87] Furthermore, some connections are not limited to Tibet, but can also be found in Chinese beliefs. For example, the popular Tibetan mythology of creation describing the dichotomy of white light and black light incarnated in two beings in the struggle between good and evil may have stemmed from ancient Iranian Zurvanism and Manichaeism, somewhat similar to Taoistic notions of *yin-yang* in which the two forces are formulated to be complementary.[88] An earlier influence from the Iranian dualism of *light* and *darkness* as well as *Ahura Mazda* and *Ahriman* on the Chinese concept of *yin* and *yang* has also been proposed and argued.[89] The reason for these parallels in Tibet and China is that Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism of Iran made their way further than Tibet, extending through northern China, where they exerted more influence. This is not surprising, since owing to the interactions and political alliances between the Sasanids with the Chinese T'ang dynasty, Iranian influences had already been established in Chinese styles of art and craftsmanship by the seventh and eighth centuries.[90]

Tucci asserts that the Iranian conception of the Tibetan *Chinvat Bridge* into the next world, which was also passed on to the Muslim eschatology (in Persian this purgatory bridge is called *pul-i sarāt*), arrived in medieval Europe via translation by the Arabs of Castalia.[91] Following Tucci's research, Melikian-Chirvani published a study containing a list of plausible and interesting cross-influences between the Iranian and Tibetan worlds, from both before and during the Buddhist era[92] (Tibet became Buddhist in the seventh century). The Tibetan imitation of Iranian hunting equipment, wine vessels, banquet wares, Persian silk (*parniyān*) for the Tibetan royal garments, and certain art motifs are believed to have made their way to Tibet via migration and commercial exchanges.[93] By the same trade route the Tibetans, having the best *moshk* (musk) next to the Khotanese, made their products available to the Iranians, as shown by references in literary sources.[94]

Tibetan references to the *ta-zhig* (Tajik) land and people in their medical textbooks, as well as a reference that the Tajik or eastern Iranians are the source of paper, indicate further the level of Tibetan exchange with the Iranian world.[95] The suggestion that certain Tibetan Buddhist motifs were borrowed from Iranian sources further supports evidence of exchange between the two cultures. The crescent moon, a Sasanid ceremonial symbol, can be seen on the head of the Buddha or at the top of a stūpa.[96] Today this crescent moon symbol is seen in almost all types of stūpas in the Himalayan countries (the very same crescent moon is present in the Islamic emblems). Likewise, the Iranian imperial symbol of a parasol used in Tibetan Buddhist iconography over the head of the Buddha or his mother Mahamaya is presumably another borrowing.[97] Finally, Kashmir and Tibet had collected many scientific works from India and Iran (as well as from Greek sources) that were eventually translated and utilized in the Islamic world, including Iran, through the mediation and patronage of the Barmakids in Baghdad in the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

On the western border of Tibet, in Khotanese Buddhist art there appears to be the image of Rustam, a mythical Iranian hero who has been transferred into the figure of a bodhisattva.[98] Particularly interesting is the fact that in Khotan, a so-called Iranized Central Asian region, many Buddhist writings were produced. For example, the Buddha's sayings were recorded in the *Dhamapada* in Gandhāri dating from the second or third century. This book was compiled in Khotan during the ninth and tenth centuries, as were other important Buddhist literatures including a Khotanese book of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the *Book of Zambasta* (a collection of poems on Buddhist teachings composed between the seventh and eighth centuries).[99]

An even deeper impact of Iranian culture on Buddhism occurred when the old nomadic Turkish tribes coming from northern Mongolia conquered the Central Asian regions of Farghāna, Soghdīana, and Tukhāristān around the sixth century. These tribes came into contact with the various Iranian religions such as Zurvanism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and of course Buddhism, some of which they adopted from the Middle Iranian world and languages.[100] Thus Turkish Buddhism in Central Asia came under terminological and conceptual influences of Buddhism in eastern Iranian territories. For example, the ideal of *bodhisattva*, coming from such an Iranian influence,[101] was chosen as a name, P'u-sa (bodhisattva), by the Uighur king prior to the establishment of his Uighur Empire in the seventh century.[102] Some Turkish kings were at the same time given the appellation of "Wise King," perhaps based on the Zoroastrian concept of the *Wise Lord*, the supreme *Ahura Mazda*.[103]

It is clear that the Sasanids traded with the Buddhist communities overland to the east. The maritime trade with Serendīp (Sri Lanka) and India via the Persian Gulf created another network with the Hindu-Buddhist world. The Sasanids seem to have even maintained a small colony in predominantly Buddhist Serendīp.[104] Commercial ships coming from Serendīp and the southern part of India and landing in the Persian Gulf ports such as Rēv Ardeshir, near the present port of Bushir, as well as the important port of Sīrāf, conceivably brought not only goods[105] but also Buddhist settlers and relics that influenced the Persian Gulf region in various

cultural ways, a subject that has remained unexplored in the field of anthropology until now. In the maritime trade, some studies even show ancient and medieval interchanges between Iran and Southeast Asia, with the presence of Iranian elements in Malay culture and language as well as the presence of an Iranian community in the Siamese (Thai) kingdom.[106] But by and large, the topic of interactions between Persian Gulf culture and the Buddhism of the Indian Ocean requires future research and analysis.

To conclude, it is historically sound to claim that the permeable cultural borders between Buddhist and non-Buddhist cultures in eastern Iranian territories remained fluid and open until around the ninth century, with the rise of the Saffārid dynasty, and ended with Ghaznavid dynasty in the eleventh century. Before the rise of these two dynasties in the early Islamic period, Buddhism flourished in Khurāsān and its peripheries. The conversion of the important Türki-Shāhī ruler, Taghpar (572–581) to Buddhism, followed by his brother Nivār,[107] gave continuity and another boost to Buddhist and Hindu culture and architecture in Khurāsān and to the south of it.[108] Hsūan-tsang in the seventh century reports on the two colossal Buddha statues carved from the cliffs in Bāmiyān, which are believed to have been created between mid-sixth and early seventh centuries.[109] These two surviving giant statues are believed to be the product of Buddhist art and architecture of this period. The Buddhist cave paintings in Bāmiyān must have largely been made around the mid-seventh century and the trade as well as pilgrimage continued until ninth century, but the Buddhist era ended there with the rise of the Ghaznavids in the tenth century.[110] Interestingly, these two carved statues were allegedly exploited by the Ghaznavids to identify them with the idols mentioned in the Koran, namely Lāt and Manāt.[111] Such Koranic analogy has been equally alluded to in connection with the invasion and destruction of idols at Somnath temple in Gujarat in 1025 by the iconoclast Ghaznavids. A number of the earliest Persian poets allude to the two giant statues. Muslim scholars of the medieval period who referred to them include Ibn Nadīm (d.998), who mentions that Buddhists would come from various countries for pilgrimage in Bāmiyān.[112]

The fate of Buddhism in Khurāsān, eastern Iran, Kabul, and the Sindh remained fragile until the rise of the Saffārid dynasty in eastern Iran. The iconoclastic ruler of this dynasty, Yaʿqūb ibn Laith (r.840–879), raided Kabul, which was later raided by the Ghaznavid Sabūktakīn in the late tenth century. Such continuous attacks followed by Mahmud Ghaznavid, brought about the massive cultural demise of Buddhism and Hinduism in Khurāsān and other parts of eastern Iran.[113] The Saffārid Yaʿqūb's anti-Buddhist campaign led him to encroach on the "infidel" country of India, and to suppress Buddhism as well as Hinduism wherever he could. Yaʿqūb's successor, his brother ʿAmr, who defeated the Shāhī king Kamālū, came to serve the interests of the caliphate of Baghdad by sending 50 gold and silver idols (a mixture of Buddhas and Hindu deities) to Caliph Muʿtamid, which were later dispatched to Mecca[114]—probably for display as a symbol of the caliph's iconoclasm and for a revival of the historical memory of Mohammad's defeat of idolatry. Another set of idols collected from Kabul and Logar valley was sent by ʿAmr in 896.[115] The caliph Ma'mūn also dispatched Hindu-Buddhist objects, including some from Tibet, to the Kaʿba in Mecca for display for the Muslim pilgrims.[116]

However, pockets of Buddhism continued to survive in the highlands and even in the Bāmiyān valley and Sindh until the tenth century, and not all areas were Islamized even by the eleventh century.[117]

After the complete conquest and consolidation of these dynastic forces in the Buddhist territories of Iran all the way to Khurāsān and Sindh by the eleventh century, the Buddhist communities went into displacement and migration and direct contact between them was lost. Intellectual Buddhism disappeared into agrarian life and was gradually assimilated into other communities. Buddhists in some areas did not take up arms in their own defense against the Muslim army.[118] Therefore, their choices became meager, especially when at times they were denied the accepted *dhimmī* (non-Muslim) status for living in the predominantly Muslim areas.[119] Many probably converted to Islam perhaps to avoid isolation as well as the Islamic poll tax. Their Buddhist monasteries were deserted, and monks either converted or left. Because of the dire situation in Sindh, the Buddhists there are said to have converted to Islam voluntarily.[120] The scattered pockets of Buddhist communities in Iran can be assumed not to have been in any better situation. But as mentioned before, the physical removal of Buddhism could not remove the legacy they left behind nor impede the influences they exerted on cultures, including in Iran, in the Islamic period.

The Blending Continued Despite Resistance

Despite the departure of the Buddhist community and culture from eastern Iran and Central Asia, various forms of art, literature, and mysticism conceivably Buddhist in nature persisted, impacting the Islamic culture in those regions. Through Muslim encounters with existing Buddhist art and culture, the tendency to blend the old with the new cultural elements continued into the Islamic period, although not openly permissible. Eastern Iranian cities including Neishābur, extending to Khurāsān and to the cities of Balkh, Bukhārā, Merv, and Ghazni, had a long heritage of Buddhist art and architecture, which influenced the building of mosques and religious art motifs.[121] In fact, some of the Buddhist monuments and objects impressed the architects and artists, since such motifs also made their way to the Near Eastern Islamic lands.[122] Iconographic imagery and anthropomorphic figures, despite being banned by the Islamic establishment, continued to appear in the artwork of eastern Iran and Khurāsān.[123] In an imitation of Buddhist (and Christian) imagery, even the image of the Prophet of Islam, despite all the Islamic resistance, was sometimes portrayed, although at times veiled.[124] The same cultural and iconographic interactions between Buddhism and other regions can be attested in their local art and architecture.[125]

The anti-iconoclastic attitudes of average religious Muslims against such imported Indian-style imagery were associated with idolatry, and were thus bound to be destroyed or defaced, in some cases by erasing the faces of Islamic holy figures and even those of the animals.[126] In spite of the prohibition on making human images according to *hadīth* quoting the Prophet,[127] the Islamic ban on pictorial or human representation was disregarded by the Shiʿites in Iran. This is probably why the Shiʿites, influenced by the powerful Buddhist and Manichaean iconography,

eventually simulated and replaced images of the Buddha or Mānī with the images and paintings of the Prophet and their Imams.

The embellishment of Islamic mosques with gold and other type of gilding was seen as a Hindu-Buddhist imitation and therefore also subject to criticism by some Muslim jurists.[128] In the same fashion, the medieval caliphs' use of objects and Buddhist icons was viewed as part of the material culture that was transferred from a so-called idolatrous culture of Buddhism to the iconoclastic culture of Islam.[129]

During the Islamization and mass conversion of Khurāsān, some of the Buddhist heritage was transferred to the Islamic world. The famous relic of the Buddha's alms bowl was attributed to Mohammad,[130] and various footprints of the Buddha were attributed to Islamic holy personalities in Iran and elsewhere. The Buddhist stūpas became the tombs of the heroes and holy men of Islam, and the sacrificial gifts presented by the faithful to the shrines were a transfer from Buddhist tradition to Islam.[131]

The importation of many Buddhist *jātakas* and Indian parables into Persian prose[132] via Khurāsānian medium, and the use of the *jātakas* by famous Persian poets, offers more clues to the blending of Buddhist wisdom and Persian literature. The linguistic changes under the influence of Sanskrit occurred at the same time that the Buddhist *jātakas* were transferred into Persian literature. F. Mojtabai provides numerous insights showing how Sanskrit, and definitely not Greek, heavily influenced local languages in pre-Islamic Khurāsān and later influenced the imported Arabic in the literary works produced in that region. This means that during the Islamic period not only was much Indian scientific work, along with other Buddhist ones, translated into Arabic, but the linguistic parallels, syntax, and phonetics were carried over from the pre-Islamic languages, including Sanskrit, and thus used by Islamic writers, often non-Arab natives of Khurāsān and the Central Asian regions.[133]

On the surface it appeared that the Buddhists were gone from Khurāsān and Iran, but deep in the culture their legacy, though fragmented, was assimilated for centuries to come in the Islamic period, and the permeation of Buddhist rituals, tales, and spirituality made a permanent impact on the ascetic practices, literature, and iconography on Islamic Iran.

The cross-over of other elements of Buddhist culture to Islamic Iran are the subjects of the chapters that follow discussing the traces and influences. However, before the rise of Islamic culture, Manichaeism had become another channel of transferring Buddhist concepts and practices to Iran, a scenario that the next chapter is dedicated to.

CHAPTER 3

MĀNĪ, "THE BUDDHA OF LIGHT"

MĀNĪ WAS THE FOUNDER OF MANICHAEISM IN THE MIDDLE of the third century C.E., which was first developed and propagated in the Iranian world, and his new doctrine developed into one of the most widely spread religions in the world at the time. Mānī himself was the first person associated with his doctrine to come into close contact with Buddhism, but not the last. The assimilation of Buddhist practices and concepts by the Manichaean communities of eastern Iran and Central Asia brought Buddhism and Manichaeism closer to Iran and Iranian culture in different intervals.

The Manichaeans experienced at least two major exoduses in the course of their history: a move eastward to Central Asia, Turkistan, and China in response to Sasanid persecution at the end of the third century, and a move westward toward North Africa and southern Europe during the advent of the Islamic Empire and its progressive expansion. The first migration during the Sasanid time to the East brought the Manichaeans into contact with the Buddhists in the Central Asian and Chinese regions and strongly influenced Manichaean beliefs and practices. In this chapter we will explore the emerging correlation between Manichaeism and Buddhism, as well as Buddhist influences on Manichaeism and the subsequent influence that Manichaeism exerted in introducing certain elements of Buddhism to Iran. The Buddhist connection will be contextualized with regard to both the founder Mānī himself as well as the Manichaean communities of Central Asia. The focus of this discussion thus is not on the nature of Manichaeism as a religion in its own right, but rather on its intersections with Buddhism and its role as intermediary in bringing what it borrowed from Buddhism to Iran.

Mānī was an innovative prophet who lived in the third century (216–274 or 276 C.E.).[1] He was born in the part of Mesopotamia known as *Bābel*, or Babylonia, in present-day southern Iraq. His native tongue was eastern Aramaic (Syriac), but he also possessed a sound knowledge of Middle Persian and Coptic.[2] Mānī's mother, Mays or Marmaryam, was apparently from an aristocratic Parthian family, although Mānī's aristocratic genealogy may have been postconstructed in imitation of the

Buddha's princely family background.[3] In any case, both of these spiritual masters, Buddha and Mānī, were depicted as having renounced a luxurious life in favor of an ascetic path.

Mānī's father, Patek, was originally from the city of Ecbatana (Hamadān) in western Iran. A spiritual man, Patek is said to have frequently visited a temple, or more specifically an "idol temple," in the city of Ctesiphon, not far from present-day Baghdad. During one of his visits to this temple, he heard a voice that commanded him repeatedly to abstain from meat, wine, and marriage.[4] The circumstances of this episode are significant since the city of Ctesiphon was the capital of the Parthian and later the Sasanid dynasties, and in Mesopotamia during this period, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Gnosticism, three religions not widely known for having idol temples, were all widespread. This seems to indicate that the temple that Mānī's father frequented and where he heard a command to abstain was, if not a Babylonian Gnostic pagan temple, either a Hindu (Śiva[5]) or a Buddhist[6] site. It is rather interesting to speculate on whether Mānī's father, from the generation of the religiously tolerant Parthian dynasty, had Buddhist inclinations and influenced his young son. This question cannot be answered with any certainty.

Mānī grew up under his father's spiritual teachings and in a rich cultural environment within the multiethnic and multiconfessional community of Mesopotamia. Mānī declared himself the founder of a new religion and began his preaching and writing in Mesopotamia, making contact with the Sasanid king Shāpūr, to whom he later dedicated his book *Shāpūragān*, written in Middle Persian.

Later in his quest, he traveled to India where he preached and studied for over a year. Various scholars argue that before Mānī went to India he had already formulated the seeds of his new religion based on Christian Gnosticism and the dualist conceptions of the ancient Iranian religions of Zurvanism and Zoroastrianism. It is conceivable that he added Buddhist elements to his doctrine only after his trip to India. However, let us briefly consider the roots of Mānī's Gnostic and dualist doctrine before we consider the circumstances under which Buddhism was incorporated into his doctrine in its final form.

Mānī under Dualist Influences

Mānī was familiar with Zurvanism, Zoroastrianism, and Mithraism from his original cultural roots. Seemingly, he derived his dualism from Zurvanism, a pre-Zoroastrian religion predicated upon an early concept of the dualism of the Cosmos, in which Zurvan was the primary god and father of the god-brothers, Ohrmazd and Ahriman, "primal twins" representing the principles of good and evil, respectively.[7] Despite their indebtedness to Zurvanism, Manichaeans later became critical of Zurvanism from the standpoint of their own refined conception of dualism.[8] Mānī posed a threat by competing with Zoroaster's teachings, and the Zoroastrian elites responded harshly; they eventually destroyed all the Manichaean literature and challenged Manichaeism in the centuries that followed.[9] The Zoroastrian influence on Mānī is nevertheless apparent in his *Shāpūragān,* where Mānī equates the Zoroastrian god of *mihr* or *mithra* (light) with the sun in the struggle against the demon gods.[10]

Dualism was not new in the time of Mānī. Given the long and august precedent of this idea in human civilization, Mānī may be viewed as standing on the shoulders of the earlier teachers who had first formulated and developed it. As for the source of other influences, on a human level, the Gnostics of Babylonia believed that the human soul was a particle of light trapped in the human body, which was material and therefore evil.[11] This Gnostic imagery of light and darkness was inspired by the cult of Mithra.[12] For Mānī, the god of light and the god of darkness together represent the constant struggle between good and evil on both a cosmic and a human level.

The Christian influence on Manichaeism is also incontestable. It was not only the person of Jesus who inspired Mānī but the Christian concepts as well.[13] From the historical inferences we can assume that at the time of Mānī, Buddhist philosophy may have infiltrated the Hellenized Syro-Egyptian areas as well as the teachings of the early Christians.[14] Another source of Christian knowledge of Buddhism is in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 202).[15] The Greek and Christian knowledge of Buddhism—even the reference to the "virgin birth" of the Buddha by the Christian writer Hieronymus (ca. 350–420)—appears to be linked to such encounters.[16] Thus, assimilations of Christian notions within the Manichaean faith involved a Christianity that had somewhat been "tainted" by the Buddhism of the time.

For the Manichaeans, Jesus was considered an admirable figure while Moses and his religion were considered offensive and unacceptable.[17] The God of Israel and the biblical conception of God were equated with Evil.[18] In reference to the expectation of a Messiah common to the older Semitic and newer Christian traditions, Mānī considered himself the apostle of light, the final prophet, the fulfillment not only of Christian messianism but of the universal messianic expectation.[19] The Manichaean writings rejected the resurrection of Jesus, citing the inherent inferiority of the physical body: "For the body was not to be transformed but to relinquish, for it was full of negative powers, led by greed and lust."[20] In contrast, other Manichaean writings influenced by Buddhism do not use "crucifixion" but interestingly claim that both Jesus and Mānī entered *parinīrvāna*, the final *nīrvāna,* the realm of light in which one is free of the cycle of birth and death.[21]

While Christianity influenced Mānī in the early days, in later periods the Manichaean community would itself influence Christian monks and monastic life in Mesopotamia, as well as in Syria.[22] A link has been suggested between early Indian monasticism (Buddhism), which practiced rigorous psychological and bodily austerity, and its passage into Near Eastern Christian monasticism via the medium of Manichaeism.[23]

Next to Christianity, Mānī is believed to have exploited and absorbed Mesopotamian Gnostic sources. Mānī's essential dualism is believed to be closer to Gnosticism than other forms of dualism.[24] But the dualism of Mānī and of later Manichaeans may have been more of a "social dualism," positing the categories "sons of darkness" and "sons of light."[25] Meanwhile, certain similarities have also been noted between the earlier Mandean beliefs of lower Iraq and those of later Manichaeism, especially with regard to the soul.[26]

In his Mesopotamian cosmopolitanism, Mānī wanted to preach a new and unique religion that would spiritually link the West and East, and for this purpose he broke away from the Gnostics of Mesopotamia and set out for India to preach and further his quest. Whatever his motivation, Mānī did make the Buddhist world his next destination. He set sail from the Persian Gulf for the Sindh Valley in the western part of India (present-day southeastern Pakistan), perhaps also visiting Central Asia, between the years 240 and 242. [27] His travel took place during the rule of the Kushān dynasty, with their strong patronage of Buddhism in India, Khurāsān, and Central Asia. This journey and the later encounters of Manichaeism with Buddhism were not without consequence.

Buddhist Influences on Manichaeism

The infiltration of the Buddhist elements in Manichaean teachings occurred in three phases. The first phase included the reports of Mānī himself about the Buddha, during a time when the usage of specific Buddhist terminology was not yet prevalent.[28] The second phase is the Buddhicization of Manichaeism in Central Asia, when the Manichaean communities in exile imitated Buddhist practices and composed texts in Central Asian languages that introduced a Buddhist lexicon, particularly in Parthian. Later, these texts were translated into Soghdian and Uighur. The third and final phase of the Manichaean-Buddhist interaction took place in China and manifested in the Chinese interpretations of Manichaean teachings. Manichaeism infiltrated Buddhism in China to such an extent that Chinese Buddhist texts (and to a lesser degree Taoist texts) depicted Mānī as the "Buddha of Light."

In the first phase the evolution of parallels between Manichaeism and Buddhism began with Mānī's own simple implantation of the Buddha and Buddhist ideas into his teachings. The first observation of Indian influence on Mānī and the Manichaean doctrine was made by Biruni in the eleventh century. Biruni states that Mānī left *Īrānshahr* (greater Iran under the Sasanid dynasty) and went to India, where he learned about the doctrine of transmigration of the soul (*tanāsūkh*), according to which souls are immortal and never disappear, but are punished for their sin by being subjected to degrading reincarnations.[29]

Indeed the Buddhist concept of reincarnation in the Manichaean formulation emerges in three paths: death and final condemnation; life and awakening; and rebirth as another chance for liberation.[30] Mānī denied the final resurrection of the body but did expound on the fate of the soul in the hereafter according to the division of the three categories of humanity: the Elect as highly spiritual, Hearers as psychically human, and Sinners as predominantly material—a division known among Indians as well as the Gnostics.[31] The Manichaean concept of reincarnation is reported in several Islamic, Christian, and Manichaean sources. The group of Elect as infallible is assured of enjoying eternal bliss and knowledge, whereas the Hearers and Sinners experience a sort of rebirth and renewed state of existence.[32] Besides the idea of reincarnation, Mānī also taught the distinct practices of *ahimsā* or nonkilling of sentient beings, vegetarianism, celibacy, no wine, and extreme forms of asceticism and monasticism. While some of these practices may individually be attributed to Gnostic influences, the practice of combining all of these together may certainly be

regarded as having an Indian Buddhist origin.[33] Mānī as an artist understood the power and persuasive role of art in religion,[34] and what he learned from Buddhist iconography made his message more convincing.

In the Manichaean hagiographical works, Mānī apparently designated himself as the future Buddha or *maitreya.* This messianic attribution can be found in the Central Asian Buddhist literature, whereas for the Christian-influenced Manichaeans in the western territories, Mānī is the Paraclete or the comforter promised by Jesus in John 15:26.[35] Despite the emergence of these Eastern and Western parochial versions depicting Mānī as the savior in their respective Buddhist and Christian environments, Mānī himself had sought to overcome the barriers of language and geography that had restricted previous prophets in order to promulgate his teachings in both the East and the West.[36]

Mānī's own reference to the Buddha in the *Shāpūragān,* composed in Middle Persian in the middle of the third century,[37] confirms his involvement with the world of Buddhism, relying as he does on the figure of the Buddha in support of his own claims. Mānī considered the Buddha a prophet like other prophets in history such as Zoroaster, and placed himself, moreover, in the same august company. In his *Shāpūragān*, written after he returned from India, Mānī states: "Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called Buddha (*bwt*) to India, in another by Zarādusht to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age, through me, Mānī, the messenger of the God of truth to Babylonia."[38]

In his *Shāpūragān*, Mānī dates the Buddha's lifetime to before that of Zoroaster, thus misleading Muslim scholars such as Biruni and Shahristānī who dated the Buddha's advent between Abraham and Zoroaster or between Noah and Zoroaster.[39] Mānī later acquired more reliable information and changed his dating of the Buddha's lifetime in his later *Book of the Giants* (written after the *Shāpūragān*), where he states that the Buddha lived between Zoroaster and Jesus; however, both dates he proposed were speculative.[40]

Claims that Mānī was the promised Buddha occurred regularly. In one source he is reported to have converted the king of Tūrān (*Tūrān Shāh*) to his doctrine, prompting the king to say to Mānī, "Of all these you are the greatest and most glorious, for in truth you yourself are the Buddha."[41] Reports like this became the basis for references by the Manichaeans of Central Asia and on the Silk Route to Mānī as the expected future Buddha, or *maitreya*, who was part of an established secular eschatology in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Despite the later Manichaean claims, it is not certain that Mānī indeed considered himself the *Buddha Maitreya* and saw Buddha's message as no different from his own. He naturally saw the Buddhist teachings corrupted at the hands of dogmatic followers after the Buddha.[42] Mānī's claim to be the expected *maitreya*, or the returning Buddha who has come to implement the task of *buddhahood*, is nevertheless reflected in later Parthian and Soghdian sources.[43]

The later imitation of Buddhism may have originated from the person of Mānī. The Manichaean monastery, or *mānistān*, became a replica of the Buddhist *vihāra*,[44] or *sangha* (Buddhist community), and a number of Buddha's birth stories (*jātaka*s)

were incorporated into Manichaean literature.[45] One difference is that Manichaean mendicants, unlike their Buddhist counterparts, did not go alms-seeking; their meals were provided for them presumably by the community.[46]

The second phase of a Buddhist evolution of Manichaeism began after Mānī's death. The Manichaeans of eastern Iran, Khurāsān, and Central Asia began to refer to Mānī as the expected and returning Buddha. In the Central Asian literature, Mānī was sometimes depicted as the "divine twin" of *Buddha Maitreya* or even as "God Buddha."[47] Some Manichaean hymns mention "Buddha Mānī" or "Mānī Buddha" while other sources refer to Mānī as the "father, leader, preacher, healer, awakener and savior; the highest God."[48] As these assertions gathered weight and attracted more followers, they came into competition with Buddhist claims, and also competed for acceptance in areas dominated by Zoroastrianism.

In regard to the choice of language and adoption of the Buddhist terminology and concepts it is pertinent to mention the founder of Central Asian Manichaeism Mānī's disciple, Mār Ammō, who preached and wrote in the Parthian language. Many Buddhist motifs and stories began to emerge in Parthian Manichaean writings. The Manichaeans assimilated many of the practices and terminology of their Buddhist rivals into their doctrine. It is perhaps ironic that in their efforts to present themselves as reformulators of the Buddhist doctrine and saviors of the Buddhist community, the Manichaeans ended up adopting many fundamentally Buddhist concepts and practices themselves. A series of Buddhist terms were introduced in the Manichaean spiritual culture. The terms *samsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, *š'qmn bwt* (Shakyamuni Buddha), *nyrb'n* (nīrvāna), *mytrg* (maitreya), and *šmn* (shaman or Buddhist mendicant) were easily adopted by the Manichaeans.[49] Indeed, many Mahāyāna Buddhist themes were used by the Manichaeans to their advantage. Themes such as *dharma* (law or teaching), *karūnā* (compassion), *sunyāta* (emptiness), *bodhi* (insight), *bodhisattva* (the awakener of other beings), *prajñāpāramitā* (perfect wisdom), *upāya* (skillful means), even the "Buddha of Light" and the realm of infinite light called *amitābha* (from Sanskrit *amitā*, infinite, and *bha*, light) were all borrowed from the Buddhist vocabulary.[50] Manichaeans, in bringing their interpretations of *samsāra* closer to Theravāda Buddhism, described the concept of attachment to body, matter, and the world as negative. This samsaric attachment was the "negative" or "dark" side of things, in contrast to the deeper level of reality, *nīrvāna* as a realm of light. This and similar interpretations of Buddhist concepts certainly served the dualism of Manichaean doctrine.[51]

The Manichaean psychology of consciousness involving the fluctuations of the five aggregates of human psychophysical personality was based on the Buddhist *Abhidharma* and even a detailed interpretation of Theravāda Buddhism.[52] The common ground for both Manichaeism and Buddhism, however, lay in their ascetic observances of the body, mind, and the material world, and that the Buddhist *nīrvāna* was to be equated with Manichaean *Kingdom of Light*.[53]

The fundamental difference between Manichaeism and Mahāyāna Buddhism was on the question of the material world. The Manichaeans considered it to be negative, whereas the Mahāyāna Buddhists taught a less polarizing doctrine of nonrejection and nonattachment to the material world as part of the Middle Path toward the final task of *nīrvāna*.[54]

The Central Asian Buddhist and Manichaean communities, despite doctrinal disagreements, lived side by side until the advent of Islam between the seventh and eighth centuries, when both communities were pushed into China. The resulting introduction of Manichaeism into China took place in 694, and particularly into the Uighur kingdom through the conversion of the Uighur king Kagān Bögü in 762 to Manichaeism.[55] Under his patronage, the Uighur translations of Manichaean texts from Soghdian into Uighur led to another level of Buddhicization of Manichaean doctrine by the earlier Buddhist culture, in spite of the Uighur intolerance of local Buddhism. During this phase, Uighurs favored and promoted Manichaeism over Buddhism despite the fact that Manichaean adepts had adopted key Buddhist concepts—an uneasy blend of the two doctrines in the Uighur religious atmosphere.

The third phase of Manichaean-Buddhist interaction and propagation emerged in mainland China and provided for the fusion of Chinese Buddhism and Manichaeism. In Chinese Manichaean literature, the myth surrounding Mānī's birth and message became almost analogous to that of the Buddha: Mānī's mother, having observed rules of abstinence, gave birth to Mānī through her chest.[56] This is similar to the myth of Buddha's birth, in which he is said to have entered into worldly existence from his mother's side. The birth of Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoism, was similarly mythologized in China. Thus, the births of the "Three Saints," Lao Tzu, Buddha, and Mānī, are all mythologized as supernatural in Chinese Manichaean literature.[57] In addition, Mānī is represented as the fulfillment of the Buddha's prophecy. One Manichaean text even explains why Manichaeans wear a white robe rather than the red or saffron robe of the Buddhists: "Thirteen hundred years after the Buddha's nīrvāna, the *kasāya* [the robe of Buddhist monk] will be changed into a white one and will be no longer dyed."[58] Manichaean monks wore white monastic robes as a symbol of their pure, untainted doctrine.

The representation of Mānī in China was no less Buddhist than in Central Asian writings. Mānī in Chinese Manichaean literature is considered the "King of Law," the "Buddha of Light" and perfect wisdom.[59] The Chinese devotion to Mānī was so strong that it misled Firdousī (d. 1020), the epic Persian poet, to believe that Mānī was a Chinese prophet and master of painting, referring to Mānī's own book of painting called *Arzhang*.[60] Manichaeism thrived in China up until the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), at which time the stronger Taoist forces began to prevail, with Manichaeism finally going underground and ultimately disappearing.[61] It has been suggested that the name *Ming* (meaning "light") may refer to the dynasty's founder, who revived the memory of Manichaean secret societies in China.[62]

This phase again frustrated the Chinese Buddhists, who challenged Manichaeism in their writings and polemics, which led to a similar attempt by their Tibetan counterparts to demonize Mānī and Manichaeans.[63] Certain Buddhist communities in those regions adopted Manichaean concepts and practices to a lesser extent than vice versa.[64] Nonetheless, it has been mentioned that Manichaeans exerted their influence over various Tibetan Buddhist themes as well.[65]

The three phases of the Buddhicization of Mānī's teachings thus account for the continuing influence of Buddhism on Manichaeism. This Buddhist doctrinal flavor at different intervals would play a large role in the advent of Islam in Iran as the Muslims encountered the Manichean presence in eastern Iran and Central Asia.

The influence of the Manichaeans of Central Asia on the religious and cultural development in Iraq and mainland Iran in the early Islamic era, therefore, diffused and blended Buddhist elements into the "daughter culture" of Iran. This process and the anthropology of Manichaeism deserves a greater research than the scope of this chapter allows. However, let us briefly discuss a number of themes that the Manichaeans introduced to Islamic Iran, in both pre- and post-Islamic eras.

MANICHAEISM AND IRAN

While in exile, the Buddhist influence on Manichaeans in Central Asia manifested not only in the doctrinal realm as mentioned earlier, but also in their iconography and art. Through the architecture of the dome and *mihrāb* (an honorable space, or semicircular niche) and by depicting their holy figures in a seated position like *bodhisattvas* adorning their *Mānistāns* (monasteries), the eastern Manichaeans definitely showed Buddhist influences. Manichaean art adapted Buddhist styles and themes so seamlessly that it can be difficult to distinguish between the two doctrines' artistic styles and themes.[66]

Like the Buddhists at their temples, the Manichaeans displayed their doctrinal symbols by flying silk and other cloth banners.[67] Their finesse in calligraphy—Manichaeans decorated their pages of writing with gold, black, and red ink—had a Buddhist precedent.[68] The lotus symbol, borrowed from Buddhist art, appears frequently in Manichaean art, with Mānī and other saints often seated on a lotus. The lotus flower symbolizes purity[69] and the blossoming of the mind while the physical body is receiving nourishment from the world. All of these artistic and iconic symbols from the Buddhicized Manichaeans were later transferred to the Iranian religious, spiritual, and literary culture in the Islamic period. Furthermore, the cave paintings of the Manichaeans, inspired by Buddhist sources, showed portraits of trees, birds, and flowers.[70] The ban on human pictorial representation during the Islamic period meant that such nonhuman art motifs from the Manichaean sources were used in ceramics, mausoleums, mosques, and miniatures.

Manichaean spiritual and literary metaphors became a link between their Buddhist counterparts and, quite significantly, the later Sufi poets of Iran. The significant metaphors for the Manichaeans were the *sea*, symbolizing the source of movement causing birth and death or Buddhist *samsāra*; a *pearl*, symbolizing the lively soul trapped in its dark shell, the body; a *ship*, symbolizing the truth caught in a stormy sea of life that needs a compass and captain, that is, a doctrine and a master; a *jewel*, symbolizing the three Buddhist jewels (*the Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*); a *tree*,[71] symbolizing life, under whose shadow wisdom and enlightenment can be attained (similar to the Bodhi Tree); and finally *melody* (music), symbolizing the power of the divine.[72]

On a literary level, the appearance of the Buddha's name in the Persian language and poetry had begun with Mānī's use of it in Middle Persian. The appellation of *bwt* in his book of *Shāpūragān* may be the first instance; it later became *botta* in Parthian language, *pwty* in Soghdian, and *bot* in Pahlavi writing.[73] In the proper Sanskrit pronunciation of the name *Buddha*, the last letter of "a" remains silent

and thus it is pronounced *Buddh*. Eventually modern Persian in the Islamic period adopted the term *bot* for the *Buddha*, but the word gradually and erroneously came to mean "idol" or an object of worship.[74] While the early Islamic scholars used the word *budd* for the Buddha, as appears in the writings of Jāhiz, Masʿūdī, Shahristānī, and Biruni, others, particularly Persian poets, have used it to stand for "idol."[75] Many Persian poets used the term *bot* to symbolize "beauty" and an object of adoration. The analogy of *bot* with beauty had very much to do with the well-groomed Buddha statues with red cheeks and lips, often with the halo of the moon in the background, produced by the monks of Kashmir and Turkistan, places referred to as *chīn* or "China" in Persian poetry.

Poets of various epochs and regions trying to express the utmost beauty have used analogies such as *bot-i māhrouy* (moon-faced Buddha), *bot-i ārāsteh* (groomed Buddha), *bot-i farkhār (*Buddha of Farkhār[76]), *bot-i Qandahār* (Buddha of Qandahar), *bot-i chīn* (Buddha of China-Turkistan), and *bot-i zībā* (beautiful Buddha). When a poet refers to the almond-shaped eyes (*cheshm bādāmi*), and rose-bud lips (*lab-i qūnche*) as symbols of beauty, it is presumably an allusion to the face of a Turkistānī Buddha (*bot-i chīn*) with almond-shaped eyes and red lips. The poets have even described the virtues of *bodhisattva* and *maitreya* such as *bot-i dastgīr* (lending-a-hand Buddha), *bot-i mehrabān* (compassionate Buddha), and *bot-i gol-rokh* (blooming-faced Buddha).[77] Also in Persian poetry countless occurrences of metaphors such as *bot-khāneh* or *bot-kadeh* (Buddhist monastery, generally referred to as an idol-temple) have been used to refer to a temple forbidden in the Islamic tradition. Some examples of the use of the *bot* in Persian poetry are:

> Your curly hair is seduction of infidelity while your moon-face is piety,
> Glimpse it from the infidel's eye you'll then see bot as a source of blessing.
> In every moment like the Moon the venerated "bot" shows its face,
> Until the Arab symbols surfaced, the heart then hid its secrets.
>
> —Rumī

> We all venerate the idol (*bot-parastī*),
> This world represents the bot and we are all *shamans* (Buddhists[78]).
>
> —Rudakī

> If only a Muslim knew what "bot" stood for,
> How would then he misunderstand the true belief of worshipping "bot" (*bot-parastī*)?
> Inside each bot there is a hidden living soul,
> Underneath the *kufr* (infidelity), there is a hidden conviction.
>
> —Shabestarī

In the broader context, the influences of Manichaean on certain Islamic and Shiʿi tenets can be attributed to a scattered Manichaean community in the Near East before the rise of Islam, especially in Hira (present-day Kufa), the capital of the Lakhmid principality, and even among the members of the Quraysh clan of the Prophet Mohammad.[79] If a fusion did occur between the Manichaean and pre-Islamic

Arabs, then it is possible that the Manichaean reformulation of Jesus's crucifixion indirectly influenced the Islamic interpretation. Generally the Manichaean thinkers, owing to their strong familiarity with Christianity, felt superior to the orthodox Christians, whom they believed had been judaized and were "semi-Christians."[80] The Manichaeans took the liberty of rejecting the idea that Jesus died on the cross. They believed that Jesus had come from the world of light in a phantasmal body that could not have died on the cross, and that his counterpart and antagonist body was crucified instead. This Manichaean view of Jesus was curiously adopted in the Koran (4:157–8).[81]

The Manichaean practices of celibacy, vegetarianism, abstaining from wine, not harming animals and plants, and asceticism[82], as well as their belief in reincarnation, may all have influenced various ascetic Islamic groups in Iraq, Iran, Central Asia, and North Africa. In the early periods of Islam, the infiltration of the notion of transmigration of the soul (*tanāsukh*) among Shiʿi Ghullāt (exaggerators) of Iraq and Ismāʿilīs in North Africa may be attributed to the Manichaean influence.[83] The refusal to accept doctrinal concepts such as the resurrection of the dead, the afterlife, the existence of Paradise and Hell, and the Day of Judgment by these nonconformist Muslims may have come from their non-Islamic Manichaean environment. The Shiʿi Ghullāt emphasized immortality of the soul and spiritual resurrection in this world where reward and punishment fall on the soul through reincarnation.[84] In Iraq between the seventh and eighth centuries, nonmainstream Muslims, including Shiʿi extremists, were suspect. Meanwhile multiple nonsectarian intellectual personalities between the eighth and ninth centuries, such as Ibn al-Muqaffa', Abū 'Isā al-Warrāq,[85] Bashshār b. Burd,[86] and Sālih b. Abd al-Qūddūs, were killed on suspicion of upholding non-Islamic, particularly Manichaean beliefs.[87] Such Manichaean suspects were labeled as *zindīq*.[88] By the tenth century, the term *zindīq* had also become a common and popular label for the Manichaean dualists known as the *Dināwarī* around the cities of Neishābur and Samarqand.[89]

The Ghullāt groups refused the legitimacy of the caliphate and cursed the Umayyad Caliphs, and their exaggeration of the virtues and role of 'Ali and the special qualities of his descendants are suspected to have come from local Manichaeism.[90] Certain sacred numbers may have been transferred from Manichaeism to Shiʿism: for instance, the concept of 12 holy figures (masters) and 72 envoys who became martyred.[91] Without delving in depth into the origin of the Ismāʿilīs and the roots of their ideas, it can be said that their superpower attributes and eschatological claims about Imam Jaʿfar's Imamate and his son Ismāʿil, the Hidden Imam, were rooted not only in Muʿtazila school but in Ghullāts.[92] The idea of the final or Hidden Imam is an eschatological idea believed to be drawn from Manichaeism.[93] The Ismāʿilīs' belief in reincarnation, along with their other nonmainstream beliefs, raised concerns that their concepts had roots outside of Islam.[94]

A similar group of Ismāʿilī militants occupied the political and religious life of Iran until they were supplanted by the thirteenth-century Mongol army. Although controversial, the infiltration of the Manichaean elements in certain Shiʿi sects, eccentric Sufi orders, and even political movements in Iran are yet to be researched.

Final Comment

Mānī and later Manicheans through the course of their history adopted Buddhist beliefs and practices that were to trickle into the Iranian cultural and religious life. Manichaeism came into conflict with Zoroastrianism and Islam as a result of its intellectual and spiritual infiltration as well as proselytizing[95] efforts in Iran. Even though Manichaeism itself did not survive, its extensive geographical coverage and the role it played in cultural borrowing and lending was critical in preventing Buddhism from completely vanishing from Iran.

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Part 3

The Traces

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Chapter 4

The Legendary Story of the Buddha in Iran

Despite the fundamental dissimilarities between Islam and Buddhism, the two traditions have intermingled, often to the surprise of their adherents. The appearance of the legendary story of the Buddha in Muslim sources shows the exchange of wisdom between Buddhism, Islam, and Iran, even if that exchange was an accidental one. In Muslim historical and Shiʿi writings, Buddha (Budāsef) is introduced as a saint and a wise man alongside the Islamic Prophet and holy figures. The legend of the historical Buddha was presented chronicling his life, his spiritual search, and his enlightenment. However, the early transmitters of the legend avoided mentioning directly that the story was from the Buddhist tradition, instead manipulating and Islamizing it. The traditional story of the Buddha as a prince subsequently appeared in Islamic and Persian literary sources, as well as in the Christian and Judaic traditions. The infiltration of this exemplary legend in Iran points toward the crystallization of a type of asceticism and morality that exploited Buddhist models. In the first part of this chapter we will put the transmission of the Buddha legend in perspective chronologically and expose the exploitation of this Buddhist story, which has symbolized the teaching of wisdom in the Shiʿi and Persian literature. In the second part of this chapter a story of one of the Buddha's previous births, a *jātaka,* will be paraphrased in an abridged version and put in perspective. It is a story that is told by the Buddha about his past life, which was adapted to the Iranian pre-Islamic religious culture and written in the Soghdian language, one of the Iranian languages of Central Asia.

Part I. Bilawahr wa Budāsef

The book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* is a legend of the Buddha that originated in Buddhist sources and later appeared in Manichaean sources before being translated into Arabic and Persian. It was this Buddhist legend that infiltrated the writings of renowned and dogmatic Shiʿi authors such as Ibn Babuya and Majlisī in Iran of the tenth and seventeenth centuries, with the Buddhist origin of the story presumably unbeknown to them.

The origin of the story must have been from Ceylonese sources, but it was subsequently recorded in Buddhist sources such as *Buddha Čarita* written by Ašvaghosa, the Buddhist scholar and poet in the court of King Kaniśka in the second century C.E.[1] By the time, this classical legend was rendered from Buddhist sources into Middle Iranian languages most probably by the Manichaeans, and later into Arabic and Persian, and the Buddha's name came to be known as *Budāsef* (or *Yuzāsef*), from *bodhisattva*, which in Manichaean sources appears as *Bodisaf*.[2] The Manichaean authors inevitably adapted the legend of the Buddha according to their own religious taste and teachings, and the Manichaean and Buddhist versions of this legend are not identical; the story takes on more of a Manichaean coloring, as it is believed among certain modern scholars.[3]

The story begins with *Budāsef* (the Buddha) in search of a solution to the problem of suffering. Along the way, he meets a spiritual mentor by the name of *Bilawahr*, whose wisdom provides his initial inspiration. *Bilawahr* remained a mystifying yet symbolic and esoteric pseudonym for the wise master.[4] In the legend, entitled *Bilawahr wa Budāsef*, the prince, Budāsef, and the ascetic master, Bilawahr, conduct discourses until Budāsef became enlightened and returned to his homeland. Upon his return, Budāsef called his father and countrymen to his doctrine of liberation from suffering, and appealed to them to abandon the practice of idolatry.

This legend of the Buddha based on the Manichaean transmission penetrated Islamic societies through the translation and authorship of various literary and theological personalities. The work of these early Islamic authors has left a remarkable and permanent yet hidden Buddhist footprint in the Islamic Arabic literature as well as in the Shi'i theological and Persian literary traditions. The presentation of this Buddhist legend has peculiarly implicated Iranian religious and literary circles in a Buddhist spiritual web.

Conceivably, the early Arabic translator(s) may have known about the Buddhist nature of what they were introducing into the Islamic literary circles. It was the later Muslim authors who dealt with the manipulated versions and lost the knowledge that the legend stemmed from the Buddhist literature. This seems likely because the guardians of Shi'ism took pride in introducing a pure Islam, free from non-biblical sources and heresy. It would have been unthinkable for the renowned Shi'i authors Ibn Babuya (d. 991) and Majlisī (d. 1699) to have knowingly incorporated Buddhist material into their work. Yet the Buddha legend strangely made its way into Iran through permissible Islamic sources such as these writers' works, and not through clandestine groups and thinkers. In the text to follow, we shall try to find the earliest attempts made to introduce the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* and investigate its twists and turns as well as the influences it exerted on ascetic and ethical literatures.

The Islamic Sources and the History of Translation of the Buddha Legend

Arab and Persian intellectuals probably made acquaintance with Buddhism and Buddhist writings in the Islamic period through two channels. One was through direct contact with the Buddhist communities and monks in the early decades

of the Islamic period in the seventh and subsequently in the eighth centuries in Khurāsān and Central Asia as well as in Iraq.[5] The other was indirectly, via the infiltration of Buddhist culture and literature into Islamic writings during the "Age of Translation" in the 'Abbāsid Caliphate of Baghdad from the late eighth through the early ninth centuries.

It is believed that originally the Buddha legend was written down and transmitted by Manichaeans, particularly in the Buddhist Central Asian regions, where numerous Manichaean communities lived, possibly by the group called *Dīnāvarīyā*.[6] The hypothesis that the source of the translated legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* was Central Asian Manichaean was strengthened with the 1902–1914 discoveries of two additional texts in Turfan (in Western China); both texts agree with the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* corroborating the Central Asian hypothesis.[7] It is believed that the Buddha legend was also written by the later Manichaeans of Central Asia in the Uighur language as far back as the eighth century.[8] Furthermore, in suggesting Central Asia as the source of the Buddha legend, Henning refers to a poem in a non-Persian alphabet entitled *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* that is attributed to the Persian poet Rūdakī (d. 941)(whose religious orientation is a matter of debate) or a contemporary imitator of his.[9]

Thus the Manichaeans were the conduit for the entry of the Buddha legend into the world of Islam and Iran. The two original books, *Kitāb al-Budd* and *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* were translated into Arabic from what is believed to be Middle Persian or Soghdian (the original language of this Buddha legend is somewhat in question since the original manuscript was lost). The Buddha legend is thus one of the earliest Buddhist writings ever to enter into the Islamic literary world.

Ibn Nadīm (d. 998) in his *Kitāb al-Fihrist* provides a list of Indian works existing in Arabic, including three Buddhist books about the life of the Buddha in Arabic: *Kitāb al-Budd, Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* and *Kitāb Budāsef Mufrad*.[10] But the details of the translation remain a mystery. *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* is believed to have been translated and edited between 750 and 900,[11] but was conceivably translated around the mid-700s because of its early infiltration in the hands of Islamic literary circles.[12] Ibn Nadīm does mention that Abān ibn Abdul Hamīd (d. 815), better known as Ābān Lāhaghī, rendered the book from its Middle Persian into Arabic[13] under the patronage of Fazl and Yahyā Barmakī,[14] descendants of the Buddhist Barmakid family of Balkh. The interest in Buddhism in Baghdad must have stemmed from Yahyā Barmakī, the caliph Hārun al-Rashīd's right-hand man, who had a personal interest in his ancestral Buddhism.

Kitāb al-Budd was incorporated into *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* which was then rendered into poetic couplets *(Mathnawī)* by Abān Lāhaghī. Apart from Lāhaghī's work, an earlier abridged version of the Buddha legend may also have survived in a chapter of a work attributed to Rūzbih pūr-i Dādawiya, known as Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. ca. 760), which points to the knowledge and possible translation of the Buddha legend before Lāhaghī in the mid-eighth century if not earlier.[15]

In the work of Ibn al-Muqaffa', Budāsef appears to be a Parthian prince.[16] There actually was a historical Parthian prince who was given the title of Budāsef (*bodhisattva*). This Parthian prince, An Shih Kao, in Chinese transcription, followed the same path as the Buddha by giving up his kingdom and becoming a monk. He then

moved to China to practice Buddhism, and translated Hinayāna Buddhist texts from Gandhārī-Prākrit into Chinese.[17] The version by Ibn al-Muqaffa', although close enough to the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef*, has not been accepted as the mainstream version of the Buddha legend, nor was it the source of future adaptations of the Buddha legend in Shi'i sources.

The translators who transmitted pre-Islamic and extra-Islamic writings and legends such as the life of the Buddha into the world of Islam were later suspect, and were labeled as heretics. Ibn al-Muqaffa' was a celebrated translator of various important Middle Persian works, including the life of Mānī and Mazdak[18] into Arabic. At the age of 36 he was accused of being a *zindīq* and follower of dualism (Manichaean),[19] along with the accusation of treason for his belligerent criticism of the second 'Abbāsid caliph, al-Mansur,[20] and was reportedly killed (or perhaps silenced). During the early 'Abbāsid period, Ābān Lāhaghī was also accused of being a *zindīq*-Manichaean,[21] but having the mighty Barmakid family on his side he did not meet the bleak fate of Ibn al-Muqaffa'.

The Buddha Legend in Shi'i Circles

And thus through the work of the Arabic translators, the Buddha legend found its way into the work of Shi'i writers over the centuries. In the Shi'i circle of Iran, the Buddha legend appeared in the work of the tenth-century Ibn Babuya of Qum, also known as Sheikh Sadūq, whose books on theology were seminal. Ibn Babuya thus became the recipient for transmission of the Buddha story as it moved farther away from its Buddhist and Manichaean inception and through the Arab translators, until it finally reached him.[22] The transmission of the legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* continued from Ibn Babuya to another cardinal Shi'i theologian in Iran almost 700 years later, Mullā Mohammad Bāqir Majlisī, who replicated Ibn Babuya's version in the seventeenth volume of his voluminous work *Bihār al-Anwār.* Later, Majlisī translated the same section into Persian and incorporated it into his book *'Ayn al-Hayāt,* from which a short paraphrase is provided below. The same story was also reproduced in the eighteenth century in Mohammad Muhsin's *Zubdat at-Tawārīkh*.[23] A poetical adaptation of Majlisī's version appeared also in eighteenth-century India in Najaf Ali Faizābādī's *Nizm-i Jawāhir*.[24]

It might surprise and even shock first-time readers that Majlisī, a dogmatic and powerful Shi'i theologian who has influenced much of the nearly last four hundred years of Shi'i opinion and superstition in Iran, put pen to paper in his important religious books to tell the story of the Buddha. Majlisī's lack of tolerance for non-Islamic or even non-Shi'i communities during the mass conversion to Shi'ism was legendary. He ordered the destruction of the Hindu idols of the residents of Isfahān and forced the Jews of Mashhad to accept Shi'ism.[25] In fact Majlisī's critics believed that his religious bigotry, fanaticism, and suppression of minorities triggered the Afghan invasion of Iran that brought down the Safavids in 1722.[26] Moreover, the extremist Shi'ism reinforced by Majlisī brought with it the new component of repressing all other views.[27]Thus, his incorporation of the Buddha legend into his writings is even more surprising. Majlisī knew that this was an Indian tale of wisdom but not a Buddhist one. Had Majlisī known about the Buddhist nature of

his story, he would either have discarded the story as profane, or would have fully decorated it with Islamic *hadīths* and completely Islamized the legend. The latter technique had already been used by his predecessors; Majlisī had unknowingly stumbled into the territory of Buddhist literature.

Before we highlight the Buddha legend from Majlisī's *'Ayn al-Hayāt*, let us review another source of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* from the Shi'i Ismā'ilī source. This source is important because Ibn Babuya's (as well as Majlisī's) version largely agrees with the Ismā'ilī version of the legend, confirming their common origin.

The Ismā'ilī Version of the Buddha Legend

The survival of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* in an old Arabic translation can be found in the Ismā'ilī version. This Buddhist narrative is the oldest surviving and longest Arabic version of the Buddha legend, printed most recently by the Ismā'ilīs in Bombay in 1889. The discovery of this Ismā'ilī version of the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* reveals the similarity of the legend to all other Islamic and non-Islamic versions.[28] The preservation of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* in Arabic by the Ismā'ilīs of India, with its extensive details, makes possible its comparison with the version that Ibn Babuya used, as well as with the later translations of the legend into Georgian, Greek, and Hebrew. In the absence of any contradictory evidence, this Ismā'ilī version was apparently the source of all the other versions and translations into Georgian, Greek, etc.,[29] unless there was an identical version that is missing.

In tracing the infiltration of the Buddha legend from the Ismā'ilī version into the works of Shi'i theologians and Persian poets, one has to consider several valuable studies. In 1969, Daniel Gimaret in a well-documented article included a short section regarding *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* and its appearance in the work of Ibn Babuya.[30] In 1971, two separate scholarly books on the topic and themes of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* appeared simultaneously. One was by Daniel Gimaret, *Le Livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf: Selon la Version Arabe Ismaélienne*, analyzing the Bombay Ismā'ilī version; the other was by S. M. Stern and Sofie Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories in an Arabic Version*. Stern and Walzer treat three stories that Ibn Babuya seems to have added to the original Ismā'ilī text and incorporated into his book. But according to Gimaret, the designation of "unknown" by Stern and Walzer for the three stories is misleading because the "known" origins of those three stories are found in various Buddhist *jātakas*.[31]

These three stories are in and of themselves interesting to briefly explore. They appear in Ibn Babuya's *Ikmāl al-Dīn wa itmām al-Na'īma*, and are included in bilingual Arabic and English in Stern and Walzer's book. The first of the three stories in brief is about a king's gray hair representing the messenger of death coming closer. Because of this sign the king sets out to become an ascetic. This story is similar to two Buddhist *jātakas*, *Nimi* and *Culla-Sutasoma*.[32] It is still unknown how Ibn Babuya came to find this in the Buddhist sources and record it.

The second story is about the skull of a king and the skull of a pauper, which in death are identical and equal. This story has a parallel in the ninth-century *Nawādir al-Falāsifa* of Husayn b. Ishaq: "I wanted to distinguish the bones of their slaves from the bones of their kings, but found them equal."[33] The wisdom that in death

all are equal appears in and agrees with at least two of the Persian *rubāʿīs* (quatrains) of Omar Khayyam (d. 1131):

The dust under every fool's foot
Is a darling's upturned hand and a sweetheart's cheek;
Every brick that tops an arch
Is the finger of a vazir or a royal head.

Oh eye you are not blind, see the grave
And see this world full of distraction and bitterness;
Kings' heads and princes are under the clay,
See moon-bright faces in the jaws of ants.[34]

Saʿdī (d. 1292), the Persian poet, also shares the same wisdom:

Oh king of the land, when your time arrives
The beggar of the neighborhood will be equal to you.

The third story is a replication of the main story of the Buddha. It is about a prince leaving the palace and his wife behind in order to solve the riddle of life's impermanency. The prince in his spiritual quest refuses to have another marital experience and disguises himself as a wanderer. The four encounters of the prince—witnessing a sick person, an aged man, a corpse, and an ascetic monk—are reflected in the third story. The dialogues of the prince (called Budāsef) with his companion about the fluctuating nature of life in connection to the precarious human conditions are eloquent and have literary as well as spiritual value in the third story.[35]

In order to better understand how the Buddha legend appeared in Shiʿi writings in Iran it is important to mention two things connected with Ibn Babuya. First, Ibn Babuya's version corroborates with the Ismāʿīlī Arabic book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* But the three additional or "unknown" stories do not occur in the Ismāʿīlī version. (Ibn Babuya's complete Arabic text of all sections is found in a copy printed in Tehran in1301/1883.[36]) Second, it is not clear whether the three additional Buddhist stories of Ibn Babuya were omitted from the original Ismāʿīlī text by the Ismāʿīlīs of India, or if Ibn Babuya added them to his own work. [37] It must be borne in mind that the correspondence of the Ismāʿīlī version of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* with that of Ibn Babuya does not really tell us if Ibn Babuya's source was the Ismāʿīlī version or even why he might have inserted the three additional Buddhist stories. Nonetheless, Ibn Babuya was the early architect of the Buddha legend in Shiʿi literature.

We now need to briefly turn to the general themes of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* as they appear in the Ismāʿīlī version and are incorporated by Ibn Babuya. According to Gimaret, the Bombay Ismāʿīlī version of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* contains four sections. The first section is the prologue, which treats the traditional story of the birth of the king's son, Budāsef, who later leaves the palace and experiences the four encounters that lead him to choose an ascetic life. The second section deals with Bilawahr, the ascetic and wise master who comes from Serendīp (modern-day Sri Lanka). In this section, according to the teachings of Bilawahr to Budāsef, the true and divine wisdom is inaccessible to people; when it becomes accessible, it is not

for everyone to truly apply it. Bilawahr teaches that wisdom is like the light of the sun: some see it clearly, some poorly, while others are blind to it. At the end of this section, Bilawahr leaves Budāsef behind for the second time, advising him to master his mind and persevere in intellectual development.

The third section deals with Budāsef returning to the true doctrine of asceticism and abolishing idolatry. He is introduced as the founder of the true doctrine of asceticism, which had become corrupted by idolatry. The Budāsef restores the true religion predicted by the earlier Buddhas. The section continues by alluding to Budāsef's missionary accomplishment alone, without the help of wise Bilawahr.

The fourth section is the epilogue, telling of Budāsef's success in converting the people of Sawilābatt (in Serendīp)[38] to the practice of asceticism, and abolishing idolatry. In the same section an angel declares him to be a prophet and guides him to renounce the world and declare his mission. Four angels lift Budāsef to the Heavens. Finally, at the end of his mission, Budāsef returns to Kashmir, where he dies. (The place of the historical Buddha's actual death is not Kashmir but Kuśināra.) It must be added that Kashmir is phonetically similar to and could be an erroneous transcription of Kuśināra.[39] The mention of Kashmir instead of Kuśināra itself is the source of another intriguing and confusing legend.[40]

Now having briefly reviewed the Ismā'ilī version of the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* it becomes easier to detect which sections Ibn Babuya incorporated into his writings. Gimaret points out that Ibn Babuya incorporated the first, second, and fourth sections of the Ismā'ilī version, adding his own alterations. For example, Ibn Babuya connects the *ghayba* (occultation) of the twelfth Shi'i Imam with the absence of Bilawahr in Budāsef's life. He also confirms that longevity is divinely granted to extraordinary figures such as Bilawahr as well as to the Hidden Imam in order to restore the true religion and repair the affairs of this world.[41] Ibn Babuya Islamized the story of Bilawahr and Budāsef by using the names of many Semitic prophets in his paraphrasing of the story. His intention was to make this story as appealing to the Muslims as he could. He was successful in his enterprise, connecting Buddhist events to Abrahamic and Islamic names and religious traditions.[42] Obviously, Ibn Babuya exploited a non-Abrahamic story to convey his Islamic and Shi'i messages. Centuries have passed, and the Buddhist nature of Ibn Babuya's stories have still gone unnoticed in Shi'i theological circles.

A version of the Buddhist legend almost identical to Ibn Babuya's is used by Majlisī in his moral and ascetic teachings. A paraphrased summary of his version of the Buddha's allegorical legend (*Bilawahr wa Budāsef*) from his *'Ayn al-Hayāt* has been offered below in order to show better the identity and powerful impact of this influential Buddhist legend in Iran. In the following account of Majlisī, the name Budāsef has been replaced by Yuzāsef (the letter "b" was replaced by "y" in the work of Zakariyā Ghallābī, not Majlisī).[43]

The Story of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* in Majlisī's Seventeenth-Century *'Ayn al-Hayāt*

After an introduction[44] the story begins with a king from India who brought a son into the world, a gift to him as a reward for his worship of the idols. He names his son Yuzāsef. One of several astrologers informs the king that this child will not

fulfill his wishes by inheriting the throne, but instead will excel to become superior in wisdom and piety. The king upon hearing the prediction made plans to keep him entertained within the compound of the palace.

The prince grows up in the luxury of his father's palace, but despite the lack of spiritual and religious people around him, he develops special virtues in piety, and his inquisitive wisdom begins to unfold. After having found out from one of the palace trustees why he was forbidden to leave the palace, one day Yuzāsef discusses the matter with his father and asks whether this is because of some mistake he had made, or whether this was to keep him ignorant about matters of life? He promised his father that nothing would go wrong if he was allowed to venture outside the palace because he longed to unveil the truth. The king justified his decision saying that it was only for his son's protection.

The king reluctantly grants permission to his son to leave the palace and orders the prince to be escorted to town. Yuzāsef takes along his confidant and friend from the palace. On the first visit, the prince is shaken on seeing two beggars, one blind, the other swollen and anemic. Yuzāsef asks his friend how these two men ended up in such a miserable condition. "If the world is not a safe abode of men, then where can humans find immunity in the world?" Saddened, but after a few days in town, he saw an old man whose back was bent forward and who could not walk. Then Yuzāsef realized how death is within reach after short days, months, and years—how fast life passes!

The prince was then curious as to whether any pious person had ever addressed these human tragedies. The friend assures the prince that such persons were around the palace in the old days, but the king had ordered them to leave the country in order not to expose him to their way of understanding. The young Yuzāsef longs to find the answers to his questions and chooses to live a contemplative life in the palace, until one day an unknown man from a distant land enters his life and changes things forever.

This unknown man from Serendīp was called Baloher (Bilawahr), a wise ascetic disguised as a merchant coming to the palace wishing to meet Yuzāsef. Upon entering the palace, Baloher made up a story, saying he was in possession of a medicine to sell a miraculous medicine that restores sight to blind eyes, hearing to deaf ears, strength to a weak person, wisdom to an ignorant man, and he even reveals information about a man's fatal enemies. Baloher said that this medicine was meant for the prince. The courtier said, "First show me this medicine and if I see it is suitable then I'll present it to the prince." Baloher told the courtier that this medicine needs youth and strong eyesight, and none other than the prince can look at it. The prince Yuzāsef and Baloher finally meet one quiet night and the truth about life begins to unfold as Baloher tells Yuzāsef a story.

After hearing the first story, the prince was impressed and wished to hear more tales about piety and wisdom. Baloher continued teaching Yuzāsef about the precarious nature of human life in this world. At one point, the prince asked Baloher to tell him a story about the futility of the world. Baloher told a story of a man who was once chased by an elephant. The man in his desperation climbed the nearest tree. Looking down, he saw at the base of the tree in a well four snakes, along with a python (*edjdehā*—or dragon) with a wide open mouth. The man looked up, and he

saw two black-and-white mice chewing the branch that he was hanging on to. He then suddenly noticed honey on the branch within his reach. Ignoring the danger awaiting him, he began to lick the honey and enjoy its sweet taste. Baloher interpreted the story for the prince. He said the four snakes represent the four human temperaments, including strong passion, as a threat to his safe existence. The two black-and-white mice symbolize the transient day and night that we live through, and the python with his wide open mouth is death awaiting us. Meanwhile, the man hanging onto the branch of life feels life is as sweet as honey—the sweetness of honey distracts him from the hazard of eventually becoming the prey of the world. Yuzāsef, impressed by the story, told Baloher, "O wise master, tell me some more tales like this."

Baloher told Yuzāsef a story about a person who had three friends. The first friend he loved very much, and he would do anything to please this friend. He loved the second friend dearly also, but not as much as the first one. He ignored the third friend most of the time. At the time of need, the person experienced disappointment with the first two friends until finally the third friend rescued him. Baloher explains to the prince that the first friend was "wealth." The second one was his own "child," and the third was his personal "good deeds"—the only faithful friend.

Yuzāsef told Baloher that the stories were affecting him deeply and giving him insight about the futility and temporariness of the world. Baloher told one intriguing story after another. The young prince then wished to know about the world of the hereafter. Baloher told him that understanding this transitory world is the foundation to gaining an immortal life. Yuzāsef asked for some advice about how to prepare himself for the next stage of his understanding. Baloher advised him to gain wisdom through detaching himself from the world.

Yuzāsef, in astonishment at this straightforward understanding, asked Baloher why people do not use this knowledge to rescue themselves from the hazards of life. Baloher replied: Such knowledge of life is similar to the sun that gives its light to everyone. If there are those who cannot derive benefit from the sunlight, it is not the fault of the sun. Those whose hearts are receptive will be illuminated by the light and those whose hearts are blind will have no use for such wisdom and knowledge.

Baloher assured Yuzāsef that there are those whose hearts will be enlightened after years of living in confusion. Yuzāsef, thrilled upon hearing those words, asked whether his father had learned this wisdom. Baloher answered him saying that he was doubtful about that and told him another story in this regard, with the message that kings have heard about this knowledge but they tend to ignore it and push it aside.

Yuzāsef wanted to know Baloher's age. Baloher wisely and cryptically said, "I am twelve years old."

The prince said, 'But you appear to be about sixty years old."

Baloher confirmed that this guess was right, saying that he was born 60 years ago, but it has been only 12 years since he came to a profound realization about life; the rest of that time was spent in various preoccupations in this transient world.[45]

The dialogues between the wise ascetic and the prince continued. On the question of death, Baloher told the prince another tale. Baloher recounted a story of a prince who, at the age of 32, gathered his courtiers and troops in and around the

palace in celebration. The joyful prince ordered a mirror. As he was looking at himself in the mirror he noticed a gray hair in his black beard. The prince began to cry and was saddened that his youth has departed him. He saw the gray hair as "the messenger of death and the enemy of his kingdom."

The prince descended from his throne and accused his faithful courtiers and troops, who were prepared to give their lives for him, of letting a fatal enemy of youth and enjoyment intrude into the palace. The courtiers united with the prince and asked him to identify the enemy and they would destroy him. There was a great commotion as the courtiers tried to locate the intruding enemy. After the commotion calmed down, the prince then said, "The enemy is not visible other than its signs who is 'the messenger of death' (*rasoul-i marg*) warning me the days of my kingdom are numbered and I must prepare myself to give up what I have built." The courtiers reminded the prince that there is no remedy for death. The prince then decided to abandon the throne and worldly pleasures to instead practice compassion and love, conditions that would help him to restore his life to its true state.

Yuzāsef was thrilled with Baloher for expanding his understanding and wisdom about life but was still thirsty to hear more tales. Baloher related another story, about a minister who wished to open the eyes of the king to the reality of life, but had to wait for an opportune time to make his point. At that time, this minister wrapped a skull in a fine scarf and brought it to the palace where he opened it, threw the skull on the floor, and began to kick it with his feet. The soldiers were ready for the king to order the minister's arrest and execution immediately for this offensive behavior. But the king controlled his anger and refrained from pronouncing a punishment for the minister.

However, the minister repeated the same act repeatedly for several days and even put dirt in the mouth and eye holes of the skull. The king, puzzled by such acts, asked the minister to explain himself and the reasons behind his actions with the skull. The minister demanded patience and grace from the king. He wanted to respectfully articulate words of wisdom that were like an arrow that would pierce soft things but get bounced back when hitting a rock.

The minister began to talk about his inquisitive mind as a youth. He said that one day he found a skull in a royal graveyard and assumed it was the skull of a king. He wrapped it in a silk scarf, perfumed it, and kept it in the best place in his house hoping it would come back to its royal life. He told the king that he had repeated the ritual with the skull for several days but noticed no change.

He thought to himself that perhaps the skull belonged to a poor man. So he kept it in a dusty and worn-out place, but he again noticed no change in the condition of the skull. He then wished to know if the skull belonged to a king or a pauper, looking for the difference between the skull of a king and a pauper. He wished to imagine and bring to life desires and all other circumstances of life that once occupied the inner contents of that skull. The minister pointed to the living "skull" of the majestic king who was sitting before him, which should never be kicked and trampled by a stranger. The minister boldly addressed his king by saying, "Your majesty, I do not wish to witness a day your body, like everybody else's, ends in being stepped on and to see your palace falling into the hands of others and that you'll be forgotten." The king was shaken and had tears rolling down his face; the

shock led him to his enlightenment, and for the rest of his reign, pious philosophers came to him and his subjects lived well to the end.

Baloher told Yuzāsef a final story about a son being born to a king who kept the son in isolation out of fear that one day he might become wise and pious. But when the prince saw sick and old men, and confronted dying people, he had striking reasons to go back to the palace to reflect upon the mystery of life. The king, based on the recommendations of astrologers, planned for the prince to marry as a remedy for his disorientation and to distract him from his ideals.

Baloher continued the symbolic story. Of course, this story was a hint to Yuzāsef about his own life scenario.

Finally Baloher prepared to go back to his country. Yuzāsef was saddened by Baloher's departure, but kept his focus on meditation and launched his own plans for leaving the palace to teach the truth around the country. God sent Yuzāsef four angels to bless him and ordered him to teach piety and the life of the hereafter. One of the four angels of God was instructed by God to stay with Yuzāsef to abandon the worldly kingdom that ends in scandal and ruin, and instead choose a kingdom that will never fail him. Yuzāsef received an order from God to spread his knowledge in other countries.

With this affirmation, Yuzāsef left the palace, remaining thankful to his master Baloher for drawing his attention and concerns toward his father's spiritual well-being as well. Yuzāsef at some point sent a message to his father informing him about his ascetic endeavors and inviting him to the path of piety and modesty. The king met his son and was motivated to follow the same path. Yuzāsef then traveled from town to town teaching the path to enlightenment. His last stop was Kashmir, where he finally joined the world of light by lying down with his head toward the west and feet toward the east, and passing away.

Majlisī concludes the Buddha legend by mentioning that Yuzāsef was a man who preached the truth, not just the superficial thoughts of philosophers. Majlisī ends the section of the story of the prince Buddha by saying, "May the Almighty provide the opportunity for wise people to stay away from lustful mind and to attain the uncorrupted sight, ears and tongue in order to benefit from these teachings."[46]

* * *

This entire Yuzāsef and Baloher story, including the three "unknown" stories, was inserted in Majlisī's writing between sayings and tales of wisdom of the Prophet of Islam, and of the fourth and seventh Shiʿi Imams. It was subtle enough to make the Buddha to appear as a legitimate apostle next to other messengers and holy men of Allah. The Buddha legend, owing to its authoritative essence and formidable wisdom, could not simply be discarded by the Islamic propagandists and transmitters of *hadīth*, including Ibn Babuya and Majlisī. This legend would not have been suspected by lay Shiʿi folks and theologians to be Buddhist in origin, especially least suspected when having been chronicled by renowned iconoclastic personalities such as Ibn Babuya and Majlisī. Perhaps no one in the Shiʿi circle would have dared to point out the true source of the Buddha legend, or to suggest that a non-Abrahamic and profane doctrine had infiltrated the most celebrated Shiʿi religious

literature. As theologians, Ibn Babuya and Majlisī had both tried to establish their version of pure Islam and to create a strong Shiʿi foundation for the society; neither of them could have taken a conscious risk to sully Shiʿi sm with Buddhist wisdom and teachings.

Even before Majlisī's time, the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* had been influencing the discourse of asceticism and philosophy within Islamic literature circulating in Iran. A Persian paraphrasing of Ibn Babuya's adaptation of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* entitled *Kitāb Bulūhar u Buyūdasf* was produced by Nizām al-dīn Shāmī in the latter part of the fourteenth century. This work was located in two separate manuscripts, which, as Gimaret points out, have been ignored by the orientalists. One of the two manuscripts, dated 1398–1401, is in the British Museum and the other, dated 1407–1408, is in the Tehran library of Mālik. Shāmī's work carries more of a philosophical tone emphasizing the Avicennian concept of *ʿaql*, the intellect,[47] a free adaptation of the legend decorated with Persian and Arabic poetry as well as numerous examples and tales that Shāmī provides.[48]

The explicit importance and the historical manifestations of the Buddha legend have taken many shapes, turns, and twists in Islamic and Iranian culture. The story of the young Buddha leaving his princely life behind for a profound spiritual journey has appeared again and again. One cannot help but be reminded of the ascetic narrative elegantly chronicled in detail in various hagiographical works, especially in the thirteenth-century Attar's *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā*, recounting the tale of eighth-century Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, a prince who left his palace, wife, and son behind, refused to remarry, and disguised himself as an ascetic wanderer and cave dweller. Another Islamization of the story of the prince leaving the palace for an austere ascetic life is the legend of al-Sabti, the son of the famous Caliph Hārun al-Rashīd of Baghdad.[49] Al-Sabti allegedly left the palace of his father, engaging in cheap labor and living in a poor hut for the sake of becoming enlightened. Al-Sabti's story seems to be incorporated in the *One Thousand and One Nights,* which itself is regarded as having a Buddhist origin.[50]

One can only speculate about the direct or indirect influences that the Buddha legend may have had on many spiritual streams and similar legends. Here we will touch upon the accounts that merit comparison and show certain parallels with the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.*

Were Other Parables and Teachings Inspired by the Buddha Legend?[51]

1. *Marzubān Nāme*

Inserting the story of the prince Buddha and his ascetic experiences into early Shiʿi literature was one phenomenon of acculturation in Iran; the other was the personification of the Buddha in Persian literary circles. An important literary work entitled *Marzubān Nāme* uses the same terminologies and even certain parables used in the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.*[52] Originally composed in Māzandaranī (Māzanī) dialect by Ispahbad Marzubān around 1010 C.E. and translated and compiled by Saʿd ibn Warāwin[53] around the late twelfth/early thirteenth century, *Marzubān Nāme* is a collection of fables and moral teachings whose origin is much earlier than

the thirteenth century, and was certainly influenced by the Buddhist literature of Central Asia and India. In the book, a dialogue between King Ardashir and the sage Mihrān-Bih about the vanity of short-sighted wealth and pleasure and cultivation of abstinence resembles the preaching of Bilawahr.[54] Another section relates a story about a man being chased by an elephant who ends up on a tree tasting honey while the danger of death awaits him; this is identical to the story in *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.*[55] It is almost certain that the author of this literary work had incorporated a number of parables from the Buddha legend.

2. Bashar, the Merchant and the Monk from Serendīp

Another paraphrased version of the Buddha story appears in the thirteenth-century *Farā'id al-Sūlūk* by Ishāq Shams Sajjāsī, a native of the city of Zanjān in Āzarbaijān. Sajjāsī reveals that he considers himself an innovative synthesizer of the stories of wisdom by assimilating various tales together. The story under scrutiny here that resembles the legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* is entitled *Hekāyat Bashar-i Bāzargān bā Rāhib Serendīb* (*Bashar, the Merchant and the Monk from Serendīp*) by Sajjāsī.

In this recreated story, Bashar is the name of a successful merchant whose anxiety about protecting his enormous wealth had turned his world miserably upside down. He has had several visions and dreams about a man on a mountain in Serendīp who was in possession of a magic medicine that, if poured on a dead man, would make him rise up again. He searched for this medicine to heal his troubled mind. He was told by his slave that his vision was nothing but an illusion and temptation of demons and it could not be true. Bashar was convinced that such medicine should be found, and he took the burden of the long journey to the mountain in Serendīp, where he met an ascetic meditating monk in a cave. He told the monk about his problem and asked for such a medicine that would cure him from his anxiety and fear of death. The monk then held a discourse with Bashar, telling him the attachment to the family, the wealth and the glory of this world would cause anxiety and therefore make him fear death as well. One must strive to detach from lust, greed, and the turbulence of the past and the unarrived events of the future. The path to liberation is to extinguish greed and lust. The merchant told the monk, "You have an eloquent speech. It seems the magic medicine I am searching for is in your possession." The monk warned him that the only way this medicine would work was when one cleansed the mind from its self-inflicted illusions. The medicine would enliven dead hearts, as his would be enlivened. The merchant asked for a blessing as he prepared to return to his country. The monk said, "Ask God for an eternal life in the alley of *fanā* (self-annihilation)." Upon returning to his own country, Bashar gave away his wealth and belongings and went into ascetic seclusion.[56]

This creative version is obviously an abridged reworking of the story of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* In its literary context it is valuable because its characterization transmits the same message of wisdom. The wealthy merchant is the personification of Budāsef, and the monk from Serendīp is Bilawahr, who has a magic medicine for those who are attached to their greed and lust. The dialogue and advice of the monk about worldly anxiety and its impermanency appear to be from the original *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* From the geographical and historical point of view, Sajjāsī's home of

Zanjān, near Sultānīya, was where the thirteenth-century Mongol Buddhism would promote the revival of any Buddhist legend for the next half century.

3. Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Safā

In the collection of *Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Safā,* another Islamic source, references are made to a prince who demonstrated detachment from the world. In one reference in it is stated, "God has chosen us and had sent prophets to our Earth in order to make its inhabitants wise; among such prophets are *al-Budd* (the Buddha), the Brahmans, and Būdāsf and Bilawhar."[57]There is also a reference made to Bilawahr in the *Rasā'il* in preaching of detachment from material objects as a means to ascend to perfection.[58]

The *Ikhwān as-Safā* authors of *Rasā'il* placed intellect (*'aql)* as the highest human faculty because it can reason out physical and spiritual aspects of existence by using the method of moral reasoning. *Ikhwān as-Safā* was a secret society formed before the tenth century whose members tried to reconcile rationalism with religion. They produced 51 treatises by anonymous authors on many topics. The monographs on spiritual topics included "The Ascetic Life," "Mysticism," and "Ecstatic or Beatific Vision." Their synthesis of views of the material and spiritual world aimed to conform to time and culture.[59] They categorically rejected religious intolerance and promoted rational investigation. In their skepticism, they wondered if reason given to humanity could help their salvation; otherwise, without reasoning power they would be a burden on the day of resurrection as well.[60] Because of their adoption of spiritual values and tolerance for rationalist debates, it is highly possible that the members of this intellectual society were quite familiar with and influenced by the spiritual Buddhist views and Indian philosophy.[61] Additionally, *Ikhwān as-Safā* on the topic of reincarnation borrowed their ideas besides the Greek from the Buddhist and Indian sources as well.[62]

4. Ghazzālī's Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat

Another individual who may have potentially been influenced by the content of the Buddhist legend is the renowned Abu Hamid Imam Mohammad al-Ghazzālī Tusī (d. 1111), an Islamic philosopher and Sufi from northeastern Iran. Due to his geographical location and timing, it is highly probable that Ghazzālī had direct or indirect access to Buddhist literature such as *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* just as his work allowed him to access Greek and Avicennian philosophy. This circumstantial supposition cannot be known for certain, since he did not replicate any particular parables resembling the Buddha legend in his works. However, Ghazzālī's famous book *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat* (The Alchemy of Bliss) is full of ascetic and meditational allegories and instructions that bring his approach close enough to the content of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.*

Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat has four major sections, of which the first two deal with religious duties and serve as guidance for various worldly matters such as trade, marriage, and social conduct. But sections three and four of the book are profoundly entangled with discussions about ascetic and contemplative life. The third section contains ten chapters, several of which have themes and outlooks strikingly similar to the themes of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* For example, Ghazzālī prescribes how to treat

the illness of being attached to the world and wealth. Moreover, there are themes such as letting go of ego, wrong perception, pride, harmful speech, and how to let go of one's *jāh va heshmat* (power and glory).

The fourth section of the book also contains ten chapters, in which Ghazzālī puts forward several identical Buddhist and yogic themes such as *mohāseba va morāqaba* (deliberation and meditation), *faqr va zuhd* (austerity and asceticism), *tawwakūl va tawhīd* (selflessness and unity), *tafakur va nedāmat* (mindfulness and accountability), and a discussion about the keys to the final bliss before death, all of which have Buddhist echoes. Ghazzālī deftly discusses meditation and its different levels as tools from those for beginning to rid oneself of ignorance to those for the highest level of attaining unity.[63] He argues against and rejects lifeless meditation in caves as practiced by many.[64]

On the issues of austerity and asceticism, Ghazzālī quotes the Prophet of Islam who endorsed and lived the dervish (ascetic) lifestyle.[65] He also quotes famous early ascetics from Balkh such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham and Shaqīq Balkhī regarding the notion of relinquishing the world and choosing modesty.[66] It is important to bear in mind that Ghazzālī's emphasis in his persuasive discourse is about attaining bliss and being saved in this world. Attaining happiness in the next world is minimized in his discourses, even though Islam necessarily emphasizes that salvation is in the next world.

It is not clear how much Ghazzālī took from the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* The wisdom of Ghazzālī's *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat* may have been inspired by *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* even though Ghazzālī tried to support his arguments with Islamic examples and prophetic *hadīths.* Whether or not Ghazzālī had access to Buddhist and Indian wisdom, one famous anecdote that infiltrated his other book, *Ihyā ul-'ulūm,*[67] can be traced to the Buddha's discourse (*Udāna*) about the elephant and the blind men. In brief, the anecdote is told by the Buddha that once a king brought all the blind men to the palace and showed them an elephant. They felt the head, back, leg, tail, and so on of the elephant. Then the king asked them to describe what they sensed with their hands. Those who felt the leg thought it was like a column, those who felt the elephant's ear thought it was winnowing basket; nine different answers were given. To the amusement of the king, each one was sure of his answer. Ghazzālī used this Buddhist allegory to speak against those shallow philosophers and theologians who in their own superficial way assert knowledge of the eternity of the world, the soul, and so on.[68] This Buddhist anecdote became widely repeated by literary figures including Rumī, who is known to have poetically elaborated the anecdote by referring to the blindness of mankind. In the end, we must practice caution by saying Ghazzālī's familiarity with and use of the Buddhist sources need further investigation.

5. The Judeo-Christian Versions of the Buddha Legend

The Buddha legend even made its way into the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Judeo-Christian translation of the Buddha legend was based on the Arabic version. It was not until the nineteenth century that the Christianized version of the story was recognized as being based on the legend of the Buddha, having gone beyond Islamic sources but remaining true to the original core of story. The Georgian

translation of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* is a paraphrased story about the Buddha, completely Christianized.[69] It seems to have been a transition between the original Arabic version and its later Greek translation. In the Greek version, *Budāsef* name changes to *Joasaph* or Iodasaph, and Bilawahr to *Barlaam*, and thus the Greek version of the book was entitled *Barlaam and Joasaph* (based on Būdāsef appearing in Arabic texts with the spellings *Yūzāsef* or *Yodāsef*[70]). In a fascinating Christian twist to the story, both Bilawhar and Būdāsef were introduced as apostles of Christianity. According to the legend, Budāsef (Joasaph) first converted his father, and then the entire country of India, to Christianity.[71] The translator of the Greek version, however, disregarded the historical chronology of the Buddha legend and its dates of transmission, and created a slanted Christian version with anachronistic additions. At the time of Pope Sixtus the Fifth (1585–90), the Greek Christianized legend was believed to be the story of Saint John of Damascus (d. 675–ca. 749).[72]

In 1957, David M. Lang published *The Wisdom of Balahvar: A Christian Legend of the Buddha*, the first important work linking the legend of the Buddha to the Christian version and providing an argument for the origin and chronology of the translation subsequent to its original Arabic version.[73] The Christian version of this Buddhist legend was enjoyed by all of Christian Europe and beyond from the eleventh century onward. Sixty versions in different languages were produced.[74] Furthermore, the Hebrew translation of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* was directly based on the Arabic text. The translation was carried out in the early thirteenth century by Abraham ibn Husdāy and titled *Ben ham-melek wa han-nazīr* (The Son of the King and the Ascetic), and became the source for the Judeo-Persian poetical adaptation of *Kitāb Shāhzāda va Sūfi* (The Book of the Prince and the Derwish/Sufi).[75]

This Christianization of Buddhist tales or practices seems to be the cornerstone of a wider Indo-Iranian, Buddhist-Christian-Islamic interaction in the course of history.[76]

The Last Appearances of the Buddha Legend in Iran

The similarities of certain literary works in Iran point to the influence of the Buddha legend not only on the works of Ibn Babuya and Majlisī, but on literary works for centuries to follow. Persian prose and poetry of varying caliber began to appear from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries very much based on the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* as annotated by Amin. We can mention but a few of the authors who knowingly or unknowingly reintroduced the legend of the Buddha into Persian literature in Iran: Seyed Qūraysh Ghazvīnī (d. 1223/1844) incorporated Majlisī's *'Ayn al-Hayāt* into his work; Mūllā Habīb-ullāh Sharīf Kāshānī (1262–1340/1846–1921) rendered part of the story into poetry; Mu'īn ul-Islam Tabrīzī (d. 1340/1921) composed poetry as well; and Ayatullah Seyed Hassan Jahānī Isfahānī (1319–1409/1901–1988) used Ibn Babuya's version for his composition. Buddha's legend from Majlisī's *Bihār ul-Anwār* was translated from Arabic into Persian by Mīrzā Shukr-ullāh Meshkāt and published in Tehran in 1321/1942, and by Sheikh Abdul Rahīm Hā'eri in 1343/1964.[77] In the early twentieth century, Sheikh Muhammad Taghī Būhlūl, Muhammad Ali Nāsih, Ayatullah Seyed Ali Naqī Amīn, and Ayatullah Muhammad Bāqir Kamarei produced translations,

compositions, and new arrangements of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* [78] The range and number of these authors and works give credence to the idea that the transmission of the Buddha legend was not an aberration, but in fact the legend was deeply incorporated into the religious culture of the region.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the Buddha legend has certainly found a special place in the religious and literary culture of Iran, Sufism, and Islam, but its influences and infiltration are not still fully recognized by Islamic societies at large. During the rapid Islamization of the newly conquered societies at the advent of Islam and afterward, many of the Buddhist icons, sources, and other traces were either destroyed or adapted under other guises in order to make them more acceptable and appealing to their audiences. The Arabization, Persianization, and Islamization of the personality and life of the Buddha for communities with little or no knowledge of Buddhism allowed the use of the Buddha legend by Muslim authors to go largely unexposed and unchallenged until recently.

As much as *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* became the source of teaching wisdom and asceticism in Islamic culture, several important questions posed by Gimaret are still pertinent. If *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* was well known among the literary and ascetical circles, adapted in several Judeo-Christian languages, and even translated into Persian by Majlisī, why then did it never gain any direct importance in the Syro-Iraqi regions and Arab Islamic literature? Why was the legend of the Buddha, though translated into Arabic in the second century of the Islamic period, kept hidden and unmentioned in the ascetic literature?[79] Was it that the spiritual anecdotes of the legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* entered the Islamic literature, including Iranian, by other routes, or were the words of the Buddha introduced in the garb of other mentionable and permissible names? Either way, the diffusion of this legend has been astonishingly widespread; only its Buddhist label has been removed.

Part II: An Iranian *Jātaka*: The Story of the Buddha's Previous Birth

This is a story that the Buddha once told his disciple Ananda, and it has become known as *Vassantara Jātaka*. This story has not left as many traces behind as the legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef,* but the *jātaka* seems to have exerted much influence in ascetic circles on the adoption of the practices of generosity, detachment, and austerity in Khurāsān and Central Asia. The story was also significant in Iranian literary circles since it appeared in Soghdian, one of the eastern Iranian languages that was used in Soghdiāna for as long as two centuries after the advent of Islam. Soghdiāna was the region between Balkh, Bukhārā, and Samarqand in ancient and medieval times, extending to Farghāna and encompassing much of present-day Central Asia. This *jātaka* also has significance because its full Persian translation recently (2004) appeared in the Iranian book market.

Jātaka is a Pali word used to refer to various legendary biographies of the Buddha's previous lives. These stories, of which at least 547 are documented, are designed to

inspire and teach the cultivation of moral character and wisdom. The *Vassantara Jātaka* being discussed here was discovered in China in the early twentieth century by Paul Pelliot. It is presumed to have been recorded during the time when both Buddhism and the Soghdian language were declining in Central Asia. The *Jātaka* was first translated into French by R. Gauthiot[80] in *Journal Asiatique* in 1912, which was consequently reviewed and corrected a few decades later.[81] The text was translated again by E. Benveniste in 1946. In Iran, Badr ul-Zamān Gharīb compared his own Persian translation with the original Soghdian and the first French translation of this *Jātaka*. This *Jātaka* exists in Pali, Tibetan, Burmese, Thai, and other languages with variations.[82]

The evidence of a number of Iranian cultural and religious influences can be found within the story. The *Jātaka* of Prince Vassantara (Ideal Action) in addition to its Indian content has numerous Iranian aspects, suggesting a strong Iranian adaptation of the story with the cultural flavoring of pre-Islamic times. Therefore, the influences of Iranian Mithraism and Zurvanism as well as the Indian legend of Rāmāyana[83] are apparent in the *Jātaka*.

In the depths of this story, we hear the enlightened Buddha telling his follower Ananda[84] about the events of the previous life that had brought him to the enlightened stage of his present life. The story that the Buddha tells is about his birth before the last, a time when he had appeared as a *bodhisattva* (as prince *Vassantara* known by the name Sudašen), paving the road for the next life with his enduring positive *karma*, when he would finally reach *nīrvāna* and offer an example to those who would wish to adhere to his teachings.

The story that the Buddha relayed to Ananda of course has many similarities with his present and last life, sharing many nuances and scenarios with the lifetime when he finally reached enlightenment. The main themes of the *Jātaka* based on the French[85] and Persian[86] versions have been summarized and paraphrased here. Although some parts of the original *Jātaka* were never retrieved at the time of its discovery, the story maintains a consistent flow and meaning. Let us explore this engaging Buddhist tale for its literary and moral savor.

The enlightened Buddha begins to tell Ananda the story:

One day in a kingdom a queen told her husband, King Šivi, about a dream she had, that seven jewels from the Sun God entered and exited her right side, giving the news of pregnancy with a son. This news made the king so happy that he fell to his knees praying to God. When he was born, the son's face resembled the face of the Sun God, and he was named Sudašen. Many feasts were organized and charity was given to the poor by King Šivi. Years passed, and Prince Sudašen grew up and married. He had a son, Krishnian, and a daughter, Jalin.

One day the prince Sudašen left the palace for town, and saw many beggars and poor people. Upon his return to the palace, King Šivi noticed that his son was disturbed, and asked what had upset him so much. The prince shared his lament over the poverty he had witnessed and asked permission to provide charity to the poor, sick, blind, weak, and needy people who come to the palace. The king granted his request to give away anything he wished to the poor, but forbade him from giving the valuable royal elephant with six ivories.[87] Upon receiving his father's permission to give to the poor, Prince Sudašen was thrilled.

The servants went into the town to make a public announcement that poor people would be provided food, clothes, livestock, and even gold and silver based on their needs and the prince's recognition of it. Sudašen meanwhile washed himself with fragrant water, put on an elegant outfit, and proclaimed that he wished to save living beings and guide them toward nīrvāna, the same path that the previous Buddhas had taken.

Many thousands of beggars and poor people from all creeds, not only from the vicinity but also from distant lands, began arriving at the palace hoping to receive charity from the altruistic Sudašen. At one point a group of Brahmins came to Sudašen, greeting and complimenting him for his benevolent work. This made the prince feel he was perhaps coming closer to his goal of being a happy and liberated man.

The Brahmins had come hoping for a gift. But they asked for the royal elephant with six ivories and nothing more. Sudašen told the Brahmins not to ask for this gift, since it was forbidden for him to give this particular elephant away. Still they chose the royal elephant, even though Sudašen tried to convince them to change their choice. The Brahmins were disappointed and wished to turn back and leave. But Sudašen wished to make them happy and didn't want them to return to their homeland empty-handed. He agreed to give them the forbidden elephant. The Brahmins in their thankfulness prayed to the prince.

Sudašen reflected on his act designed to save the living beings and guide them toward nīrvāna, the same path that the previous Buddhas had gone. The royal elephant began to cry and Sudašen sympathized; he told the elephant not to cry since his decision for this gift was not to make one man happy but to liberate all sentient beings, including the suffering elephant.

After the Brahmins left with the royal elephant, the king saw that the elephant caretaker had tears in his eyes. The king asked if some accident had happened to the prince, or if some elephant had died. The man replied to the king, "None of these things, other than that the royal elephant was given as a gift to some Brahmins." Upon hearing of this drama, King Šivi fainted in shock. After some time, the king called all his ministers to discuss the sin that Sudašen had committed. Sudašen was called in and blamed by the angry king for disobeying his command and wish. Sudašen knelt before the king in respect and said to him, "Your Excellency, nothing and no one is here permanently . . . I have given the elephant away in order to save and care for all sentient beings . . . all the worldly wealth is nothing but mirage and deception."

The king became even angrier upon hearing these words. He asked his ministers what punishment would be fitting for his disobedient son. One minister suggested blinding him so that he no longer could see and he wouldn't be able to give away things that he had not earned. The next minister proposed amputating his hands. The third minister said to amputate his legs. The fourth minister suggested hanging him and making his body a target for arrows. The fifth minister, who was dear to the king, was against all of these violent acts because a human life, especially a son's life, was valuable and could not be easily regained. This minister favored exiling the prince to a distant mountainous area. King Šivi preferred this punishment, and told the prince to go away out of his sight for ten years.

Sudašen was disturbed by this upheaval. He had to painfully tell his wife, Mandori, about his new life in exile in the remote mountains. The prince explained the uncertainty of the future, wondered whether he would ever see the family again or not, and told his wife to take good care of herself and their two children. Mandori, in tears and desperation, insisted on going along. Sudašen asked her to remain behind so that she would not have to bear hunger, hardship, and the danger of perishing. Mandori told him if she stayed behind she would kill herself, and this would be a greater burden on his conscience.

It was decided that the whole family would leave together for exile. People of the palace tried to have the king reverse his decision against his son, but all was in vain. The family had to go. Unbeknownst to the king, the wise minister who had saved Sudašen's life organized great provisions for the next ten years: a carriage, food, drinks, an ornamented umbrella, clothes, and jewelry.

The caravan set out on the road. After some distance, Sudašen stopped, faced his hometown, and bowed and prayed to his father and mother first, then prayed in the honor of his relatives, people, and servants, and asked for their understanding and forgiveness for all his shortcomings. He promised that once he attained the spiritual level he sought, he would liberate them from the cycle of birth and death, *samsāra*.

As they continued their journey they met a Brahmin on the road. Sudašen asked his destination. The Brahmin explained that he was heading toward the palace where he had heard the king had a most generous son whose name was Sudašen. He was on his way now to receive a gift from this prince. Sudašen told the Brahmin that he himself was that prince but now because of his mistake he had been exiled. Upon hearing this, the Brahmin became sad and disappointed and thought his hope was an illusion and untrue. Sudašen asked the Brahmin not to cry, that he still had something to give him. He gave the Brahmin a golden flower ornament that the minister had put inside the boxes of provisions for him. Sudašen gave this gift without any hesitation or regret, in hopes of dismantling hell and saving all sentient beings and guiding them to nīrvāna once he reached the Buddha stage, the same path that all previous Buddhas had taken.

The enlightened Buddha goes on with the story, telling of more groups of Brahmins who were on their way to meet the prince Sudašen in great hopes to receive gifts from him.

Each time, Sudašen took something from his belongings and provisions to give those needy pilgrims until eventually all the belongings and clothing of the family, including the children's, had been given away. Their carriage, horse, and all the provisions were distributed without any hesitation or regret, in hopes of dismantling hell and saving all sentient beings and guiding them to nīrvāna once he reached the Buddha stage, the same path that all previous Buddhas had taken.

Sudašen now had to carry his son on his shoulders and Mandori their daughter, walking in hardship with rocks and thorns badly injuring their legs. Mandori in her pain and exhaustion sat and wept. Sudašen reminded his beloved wife, the future queen, that she should have stayed behind in the palace and not taken this road with him. Mandori turned, and when she saw Sudašen's bloody feet and legs, with bones and flesh exposed, she forgot her own pain. Sudašen asked Mandori to get up so that

they could walk faster before the children died in that harsh condition. Mandori hugged Sudašen, and uttered to the Lord that it was her husband's bounteousness and greatness that had led them this way, but because of it they with their children might die of hunger and thirst in that wasteland.

The Lord from the Heavens observed how these bodhisattvas were suffering in order to save the sentient beings. Wishing to ease their suffering, he laid out before Sudašen and his family a land with gardens, fruit trees, rivers, and horses as well as other beauties of nature. He came down to earth, disguising himself as an old man with gray hair. The old man invited Sudašen and his family to come sit on a carpet in the garden, with food and fruits served by the servants. After they were fed and had quenched their thirst, the old man took Sudašen and his family to a palace in the nearby city and crowned him on the golden throne. But after eight days of enjoying the comfort of the palace, Sudašen told the old man that he must comply with his father's instructions and move on to the mountain region of his exile place. The Lord, disguised as an old man, said he understood, and complimented Sudašen for his sincerity.

The family set out once again, this time with provisions provided by the old man. Near the mountain, an approaching Brahmin ascetic asked Sudašen if he were a Zurvan, Narayan, or the worshipper of another deity. Sudašen replied in the negative, revealing his identity and the reason behind his exile. The ascetic man warned them about the dangerous elements of the mountain areas and took them to his hut and offered them fruits as the only available type of edibles in that region. Then Sudašen and his family were taken to an area where they could build a humble hut for themselves.

As they settled in their new place, all kinds of wild animals paid visits to Sudašen, licking his feet. Mandori collected fruits every day for their food. Days and days passed in this way until one day when Mandori was out, a Brahmin came to Sudašen, and asked Sudašen if he would give him his children since he had none to help him. Sudašen prayed, and then agreed to the Brahmin's request. He reiterated that whatever he gave away was without any hesitation or regret in hopes of dismantling hell and saving all sentient beings and guiding them to nīrvāna once he reached the Buddha stage, the same path that all previous Buddhas had taken. In seeing him give his children as a gift to the Brahmin, the earth was shaken and the seas moved, all the deities looked at the world of ordinary people in comparison, and admired the courage, clarity of heart, and detachment of the bodhisattva Sudašen.

Meanwhile Mandori was out picking pomegranates. But suddenly each time she picked one the pomegranate would fall from her hands. She sensed that this strange sign meant Sudašen had given away their children. As this thought passed through her mind, she fainted and fell on the ground. She finally awoke and came to the hut where she found Sudašen alone. She asked him about the children three times without getting a reply, until he finally told her what had happened. Mandori was distraught that an evil-spirited Brahmin had taken away their children. She cried that the children were no longer hers; they were separated from her and thus she from life. She continued crying as Sudašen tried to comfort her.

The enlightened Buddha goes on to tell Ananda the rest of the story:

The Lord, still observing the boddhisatvas, returned to earth, this time disguising himself as an old solitary Brahmin without any son, daughter, or wife. He came to Sudašen asking if he would give him his wife so that she could take care of him. Sudašen went to Mandori and told her about the Brahmin and his request and the need to be taken care of. Mandori agreed to be given away. Thus Sudašen brought Mandori to the Brahmin and expressed that whatever he gave was without any hesitation or regret, in hopes of dismantling hell and saving all sentient beings and guiding them to nīrvāna once he reached the Buddha stage, the same path that all previous Buddhas had taken.

The Brahmin turned to Sudašen praising him and said, "Glory to you, Prince, you shall attain buddhahood." The Brahmin left the hut with Mandori. But before too much time had passed, he returned to Sudašen and said he was in fact going to another land and he was going to leave Mandori with Sudašen until he returned. The Brahmin called on Mithra, the judge of creation, and other angels as witness that Sudašen might not give Mandori to anybody else.

After Sudašen had accepted the promise, the disguised Lord then unveiled Himself, and Mandori and Sudašen saw Him. In honor of their high sincerity, the Lord gave them the privilege of making requests of him. Sudašen requested the path to buddhahood so that he could liberate all sentient beings. The Lord granted him this request and praised this bodhisattva. Mandori made her wishes, requesting that the king would forgive Sudašen, and also that the man who took away their children would not be able to sell them to anyone except to their grandfather, King Šivi. The Lord granted her wishes also, and disappeared from the material world.

By now, the Brahmin who had taken away the children had allowed his wife to put them to work, but the children refused to work. The wife told the husband to take the children somewhere and sell them, and instead bring her a few slaves who would do housework. The Brahmin tried, but he could not sell the children anywhere since he was asking the excessive price of 1,000 cows.

While the Brahmin was approaching the kingdom of King Šivi to sell Sudašen's children in the market there, the minister who had saved Sudašen's life was leaving the city. The minister saw a Brahmin with two children with long wild hair whose bodies were dark from the sun. Despite their appearance, the minister recognized the children from their eyes. He asked the Brahmin where he had found these children. The Brahmin explained that he received the children from a man named Sudašen exiled in the mountain, and he was selling them because they did not take orders properly. The minister in his shock asked the children if their father was dead and if that was why they had become orphans and been given away. The children replied that their parents were still alive.

The minister, morally and emotionally shaken, brought the children and the Brahmin to the palace, and ordered the servants to wash, feed, and dress the children properly. The king was informed and called the children to come to him. When they met the king, they told the king that their father had given them to the Brahmin in order to liberate all sentient beings. Then they said, "Let us fulfill the act and wish of our father; let us suffer so that the work of our father bears its fruits." The king fell in pain upon hearing these words, ordering the Brahmin be given one thousand cows and much more in order to set the children free.

The children were sent to the ladies of the palace, who joyfully came to tears, hugging and inquiring of the whereabouts of their parents. The children told everyone that their parents were living near the mountain where they had built themselves a hut out of branches, and their carpet and clothes out of plant fibers. They were eating fruits and plants to survive and were living among wild animals. The king also heard these words and he was in tears. He called upon his ministers and asked them to pay attention to the nobility of Sudašen, who had even given away his own children, let alone the royal elephant so many years before.

King Šivi sent a messenger to Sudašen and Mandori with this message: "I forgive you, my dear son; come back here with your wife, Mandori." Mandori asked the messenger if he had seen their children and if they were safe. The messenger assured her the children were safe in the palace with the king. Sudašen sent the message to his father that his stay in exile had only been six years so far and that according to the royal decree he had to stay for ten years.

The messenger brought the news back to the king. The ministers were called in to organize a grand luxurious expedition to the mountain to bring back Sudašen and Mandori. As they arrived, they saw Sudašen and Mandori sitting in the hut. The ministers bowed and entered and gave the message of the king. Sudašen also bowed and paid his respects to his father and welcomed the ministers. Preparations were made to return.

After returning, Sudašen entered the palace and met his father, who then begged for forgiveness for his misjudgment. King Šivi placed the crown on Sudašen's head and told him to be the king and provide people with any gifts he wished. Years passed and Sudašen gave away charity to people throughout his lifetime.

The enlightened Buddha finished the story, reminding Ananda that this was the story of a man who had given away many things in his life. "And I, the Buddha, in my previous lives, gave away treasures, elephants, throne, towns, women of the palace, royal positions . . . my son, my daughter, my wife, my own body, even my legs and head, everything I gave away had been with pure heart without hesitation or regret in order to save all sentient beings. I have suffered, oh Ananda, so that I could control the ego, not let the ego control me."

Upon hearing the story Ananda got up and put on his robe and bowed and knelt to the Buddha three times, asking, "Who was Sudašen, my lord, who was Mandori, King Šivi?"

The Buddha replied, "Sudašen was me, King Šivi was the present king [Buddha's father], and Mandori was Yashodor [Buddha's wife]." So it was with the story of the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni.

* * *

Conclusion

This morally loaded *Jātaka* is representative of the literary prose produced in the cultural region of Soghdiāna in Central Asia by communities who were Buddhists and had been toiling on the path of *nīrvāna*. Similar stories recorded in Central Asia and eastern Iranian territories laid the groundwork for a new hybrid asceticism during the Islamic period in the region, which would gradually have to distinguish its

Islamic direction from Buddhism. The ascetic culture of eastern Iran learned a great deal from the 1,000-year-old, fully developed Buddhism, borrowing many similar anecdotal tales, concepts, and practices from its schools and masters in Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and Central Asia.

Discovering the extent to which Buddhist literature in Soghdian, Bactrian, and other vernacular languages was transmitted through Persian and Arabic ascetic and Sufi literature demands new research. The significance and the identical story of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, the prince in Balkh who turned into a wandering ascetic, may be just the tip of the cultural iceberg from the giant Buddhist culture that crossed over to the Islamic period. The ascetic practices by the Manichaeans of Central Asia in the pre-Islamic period and the ascetic Malāmatī movement of the ninth century in Neishābur and the Khurāsān region can be assumed to have come under the direct influence of the Buddhist ascetic culture depicted in the Buddhist legends readily available in the vernacular languages of Khurāsān and Central Asia. The asceticism followed by the Buddha in the aforementioned *Jātaka* leading to his *nīrvāna* was a universal model to which the ascetics of Iran were never oblivious. The universal and final human liberation from the bondage of suffering, for the Buddhists and the ascetics of Khurāsān, has been dependent on when one actually could give up the attachment to the three poisons: desire, aversion, and living in illusion.

CHAPTER 5

QADAMGĀH (HOLY FOOTPRINTS) AND MONASTIC CAVES IN IRAN

IN THE SEARCH FOR TRACES OF BUDDHISM IN ISLAMIC IRAN, no image of the Buddha survived in any form except in some miniatures. The temples and other physical evidences of the Buddhist past were either eliminated or converted into shrines or mosques during the Islamization of all non-Islamic components of religious culture in Iran. However, two aspects of Buddhist culture that remained were left intact during the process of Islamization and remind us today of the Buddhists of Iran: one is the shrines of the stone-carved footprints, and the other are abandoned rock-hewn caves. A number of these caves in Iran have been studied, as their similarity to known Buddhist caves in Afghanistan and Central Asia point to their Buddhist identity. In this chapter we will examine both of these physical evidences for their history and significance in the transition from Buddhism to Islam in Iran.

PART I. BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS: A LOOK AT *QADAMGĀH* IN IRAN

BUDDHAPĀDA OR BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINT

Next to his image, the carved footprints of the Buddha were significant objects of veneration in the Buddhist culture and iconography (as in Jainism and Brahmanism). There are a large number of holy footprints in present day Iran that continue to be objects of veneration, which seem in the process of the Islamization of Iran to have been left without any particular indication that they were Buddhist. Thus such innocuous leftovers in Islamic Iran took on an Islamic identity, even though this veneration of footprints was not inherently Islamic and had no Koranic or *hadīth* support. It seems to have become a tradition in unconscious imitation of the Buddhists. The hundreds of sites with *qadamgāh* (footprints) were slowly attributed to different Islamic figures, including the Shi'i Imams. *Qadamgāh* is composed of two Persian words: *qadam*, which means *foot* (in this case footprint), and *gāh*, a

place, in this case meaning a *sanctuary*. Thus Iran as an Islamic community consequently embraced the veneration of these footprints just as Buddhists did with the footprints of the Buddha. As time passed and Iranian religious life was cut off from eastern Buddhism, the symbol of the footprint came to occupy a significant place in Iranian Islamic religious life, representing something typically Shi‘i and not Buddhist for the average folks.

It can be assumed that a significant number of footprints throughout Iran as well as in Afghanistan[1] were left intact during the emergence of Islamic culture because they were deemed without a Buddhist signature and harmless. Many of these carved footprints were portrayed by the Shi‘i cultural elites as miraculous imprints of the feet left by their Imams and the descendants of the Prophet who had visited various sites in Iran. Among the numerous stone-carved footprints in Iran, the majority have been attributed to the first and eighth Imams, ‘Ali and Reza, as well as to the fictional prophet (*khidr nabī*) Khidr, and others to many other local, sometimes obscure, holy men. Around Mashhad and Neishābur the footprints are ubiquitous perhaps because of Khurāsān's open border along the Silk Route with the Buddhist world of Central Asia.

The tradition of venerating footprints of holy figures in Islam, particularly in Shi‘i Islam in Iran, is a phenomenon that compels us to investigate it in connection with the introduction of Buddhism to Iran and the settlements of missionaries. But first we should take into account the tradition of the footprint icon outside Iran. For now let us briefly examine the tradition of the footprint in the Buddhist world as a pretext to its diffusion in Iran.

The Origin of *Buddhapāda*

The carving of the Buddha's footprints was an ancient tradition, and a precursor to the appearance of the Buddha's statue and human representation. There was an Indian belief that the feet (*pāda* in Sanskrit) of a god are the closest to earth for humans to worship—a reason for the Brahmans to venerate the footprint as a corporeal extension of the deity Viśnu.[2] In the same fashion the Buddhists venerated the footprints of the Buddha in India and took the tradition along wherever missionaries went to build temples. The earliest footprints of the Buddha can be traced back to 100 B.C.E. if not earlier, and the concept of venerating footprints and other corporeal relics such as hair, teeth, and skulls find their origin in early Buddhist texts. There is no specific date known for the first footprint of Viśnu, but a number of scholars agree that the motif of the Buddha's footprint comes from the Brahmanical tradition.[3]

Sometimes the footprints symbolically are larger, not actually the size of human feet. They were carved in stone and represent only part of the Buddha's body or even his earlier presence there, corresponding with the Buddhist belief in the impermanency of the world. Thus footprints, like other Buddhist relics, have been commonly valued and enshrined in stūpas for the pilgrims. Such footprints and other relics were meant to be imaginative and open-ended symbols whose meaning was supplied by the participant pilgrim.[4]

One of the most controversial footprints is on a mountain peak (*Sri Pāda* Mountain, or "holy footprint" mountain) in modern-day Sri Lanka (Ceylon, also

known as Serendīp in ancient and medieval times), popularly known today as Adam's Peak. This name today belies the older Buddhist origin of the footprint legend. The Buddhists claim that underneath the large stone carving, there is the actual footprint of the Buddha from one of his three legendary visits to the island during his lifetime.[5] Pilgrims throughout the centuries and up to the present day climb to the peak to pay homage to the footprints there; this also serves as a source of revenue for the local Buddhist monastery.

These giant footprints were interpreted as footprints of the Buddha by some, and of Śiva by others, according to their religious beliefs and traditions.[6] It was then that the Muslims who later traveled to settle on the island relayed the account that it was the footprint of Adam from when he first entered the world from Heaven. This account was recorded by travelers to the island from Sulaymān in 851 all the way to Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century and afterward.[7] In order to justify it as Adam's footprint, several chroniclers constructed a version of Adam's descent from Heaven to the island of Serendīp.[8] Adam, having landed on the mountain peak where he left his footprint, headed toward Mecca to build the Ka'ba and to meet Eve in Arafa, according to medieval Muslim chroniclers such as Mas'udī,[9] Shahristānī,[10] and Mostaufī.[11]

The legend claiming that Adam descended from Heaven seems to have been an attempt to Islamize the earlier Sinhalese Buddhist belief. Originally, to the natives of Sri Lanka, the sacred mountain that would later be known as Adam's Peak was Rohana Mountain, the home of the god Sumana (sometimes known as Saman or Yama, depending on the legend). Legend has it that Sumana greeted the Buddha on the peak of this mountain. As the Buddhist sources put it, Sumana received the first fruit of salvation and begged for a place of worship or stūpa from the Buddha.[12] The peak was therefore called Sumanakūta in Pali.[13]

Despite the later Islamization of the story, Rashīd al-Dīn in his *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, in the section covering the life of the Buddha Shakyamuni, writes of the Buddha's footprint carved in a stone on a mountaintop in Serendīp: "People of some religions call him [Buddha] Adam whose footprint is carved on the top of the mountain in Serendīp."[14] In fact, not only did Muslims "adamize" the footprint, they also named and attributed many other shrines and mosques in this predominantly Buddhist nation to Khidr.[15] So Adam and Khidr for the Muslims came to replace what was attributed to the Buddha.

Most probably the first Muslim to declare the footprint to be that of Adam was the ninth-century Sulaymān from Sīrāf, an Iranian port in the Persian Gulf.[16] Sulaymān and then Abu Zayd Sīrāfī, another sailor from the Persian Gulf region, both had good knowledge of India and China, and they managed to convince their audience of Sulaymān's claim that Adam was the source of the footprint, since other Arab travelers and chroniclers referred to it as Adam's Peak. Adam's peak had no precedents in Sinhalese sources until the eleventh century.[17] Sulaymān, the apparent inventor of the adamic tradition, recounts that Adam was so huge that when he landed on the island he laid one foot on the peak and another in the ocean.[18]

Linking the sacred mountain and the Buddha's footprint to Adam and the Abrahamic God who sent Adam down on the peak was a direct adaptation of the Sinhalese and Pali tradition of the peak as an abode of the island god. This Islamic

adaptation was not only an attempt to reconcile the cult of Sumana and Buddhism with Islam, but it also came to compete with preexisting myths. As mentioned above, in the Sri Lankan Buddhist belief the peak is associated with the Buddha's visit as well as with Sumana or Yama.[19] The Islamic (or Abrahamic) traditions trace human ancestry back to Adam as the first human being. This parallels the Sri Lankan myth that Yama was the first father of humankind.[20] The Yama cult was then influenced by the Buddhist parables, and it was the Yama cult with their belief in the Buddha's footprint that was assimilated and altered by the Muslims who concocted an adamic tradition for it. Thus the adaptation of the story of Adam descending from Heaven in Sri Lanka should be examined against the culture and mythological sources of the island, not necessarily against those of Islam per se.

Sri Lanka is therefore associated with Adam's descent from Heaven and leaving his gigantic footprint there. There is really no reasonable explanation why Muslim chroniclers chose a small, predominantly Buddhist island in the Indian Ocean to be the first place on Earth for Adam to land from Heaven, other than to replace the Buddha with Adam in order for the Muslim settlers as well as traders and travelers on the island to have a pilgrimage site. This parochial fabrication gradually trickled into the historical accounts of medieval Muslim chroniclers and gained wider attention. The early Muslim chroniclers could not easily legitimate their claim by actually attributing the footprint to the Prophet of Islam since they knew they would run into the difficulty of convincing the majority of the Muslims who doubted that the Prophet ever traveled to that island.



Figure 5.1 The Footprints of the Buddha in Kathmandu, Nepal

In another Islamic connection, a footprint carved on a stone near the Kaʿba in Mecca was attributed to Abraham and known as *Maqām-i Ibrāhīm*. The eleventh-century Nāsir Khosrau in his *Safar Nāmeh* writes about this as the footprint of the prophet Ibrāhīm.[21] The possibility of a Buddhist connection with the footprint in Mecca is intriguing, especially if we consider the comparison of the Buddhist monastery of Nawbahār of Balkh with the description of the Kaʿba by the Muslim geographers such as Ibn al-Faqīh[22] and Yāqūt,[23] as will be discussed in the next chapter. Furthermore, attributing the footprints to the biblical prophets, one in Sri Lanka and another in Mecca, naturally adds more certainty to the thesis that the footprints in Sri Lanka and Mecca may have stemmed from the same tradition invented to deflect attention from their Buddhist origin. The Abrahamic footprint in Mecca should be further assessed against the possibility of any Buddhist presence in that area.

It was also believed that the footprints of the Prophet of Islam, known as *Qadam Rasul,* were imprinted on the rock wherever the Prophet trod. There are several more footprints allegedly attributed to the Prophet in the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (during his nocturnal ascension, *Miʿrāj*), in Tā'if on Mount Abu Zubayda accompanied by the imprint left by a deer, and in Damascus and Cairo. (The footprints were brought to these two cities since the Prophet never traveled there.)[24] Such assertions about the footprint of the Prophet have no *hadīth* or theological support.[25] It seems the tradition can be traced back to when the Muslims arrived in India and observed that the tradition of venerating footprints of Hindu-Buddhist avatars was a common practice. Thus the footprint of the Prophet *Qadam Rasul* was also introduced in various parts of India. Even in certain instances during Mughal times between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, to justify their authenticity (since the Prophet had never journeyed to India), some footprint carvings were claimed to have been purchased or brought as good-luck charms from Mecca.[26]

The tradition of the footprint and its iconic use unmistakably came from a Buddhist tradition with a long history behind it. The systematic spread of Buddhism in Central Asia, Khurāsān, and eastern Iran in ancient times had introduced the traditional Indian ritual of venerating Buddha's footprint. The scattered settlements of the Buddhist communities in different regions of the Near East, including Iran, most probably left behind the footprints that have now become Islamized and protected as Islamic pilgrimage sites.

Qadamgāh in Iran

The religious iconographic representation of the footprint in Iran definitely finds its origin in the Indian and more specifically in the Buddhist tradition, since it has no Islamic justification or precedence. How can it be determined whether the footprints under scrutiny are Buddhist or not? A part of the answer lies in the nature of the footprints' polyvalent and open-ended usage that can be exploited differently by different groups.[27] This fluidity of identity had made the footprints available for any doctrinal and religious groups to make new claims about them. The prevalence of the footprint ritual in pre-Islamic times is supported by a reference made by the seventh-century Buddhist Hsüan-tsang, who encountered a number

of footprints of different sizes in the Swat Valley (Udyāna)[28] left behind by the Kushān dynasty in Khurāsān and India. The medieval trade caravans coming from Buddhist Turkistan and heading toward Neishābur, Sabzevār, Rayy, Hamadān, and Baghdad[29] and via the Persian Gulf naturally brought many foreign merchants and missionaries, including Buddhists, to those areas. The transference and continuity of the Buddhist iconography to Islamic Iran came at the cost of the older tradition slowly slipping away into oblivion.

There is no record of how widespread these footprints became in pre- and post-Sasanid Iran through the efforts of Buddhist missionaries. And with the later attempts to Islamize these *qadamgāhs* it is difficult to know for sure how old they are or whether a newer generation of *qadamgāhs* was carved for the Islamic holy figures in imitation of the Buddhist tradition. It is significant that the tradition of *qadamgāh,* which came to be attributed to the Shiʿi Imams and their descendants in Iran, became objects of pilgrimage in just the same fashion as they were in Buddhist culture. A Buddhist origin is more likely the case with footprints, particularly in Iran, because of past interactions with the Buddhist world.

Our discussion of footprints in Iran will not individually scrutinize all 333 thus far surveyed *qadamgāhs* in Iran[30] other than to mention their locations and possible previous Buddhist settlements in those regions. An introduction in three separate categories will provide a better sense of these *qadamgāhs*: (1) those used for the names of villages or districts; (2) the actual *qadamgāhs* of Shiʿi holy figures where they are enshrined for pilgrimage purposes; and (3) those that are located near a village by the name of Nawbahār (Buddhist temple).

In the first category, there are 13 villages and districts called *qadamgāh.* These areas could possess *qadamgāhs* of one holy figure or another. Sometimes the name *qadamgāh* for an area appears alone; sometimes it is followed by the name of the holy figure whose footprint is enshrined there. The name *qadamgāh* appears alone in the districts of Sāveh, Neishābur, Marvdasht, and Fōman. The name of a holy figure attached to a *qadamgāh* occurs in the districts of Jeeroft, Bandar ʿAbbās, Mīnāb, Bāft, Shahr-i Bābak, and in two places in Beerjand.[31] *Qadamgāh* is also the name of a peak 70 kilometers east of Damāvand, nearly 3,000 meters high.[32]

The second category of *qadamgāhs* comprises the actual shrines that are registered and reported in *Farhang Ābādī-hā va Makān-hāye Mazhabī Keshvar* (*Directory of Settlement and Religious Sites of the Country,* 2009). Of these, approximately half are considered to be ʿAli's footprints. There are 102 of such *qadamgāhs* in Jeeroft district alone, 82 in Mīnāb, 76 in Bandar ʿAbbās, 18 in Bam, 9 in Beerjand, and 7 in Zarand, most of which are at high altitude, between 1,700 and 2,200 meters above sea level. Footprints located on top of mountains again have Buddhist relevance. The rest are in Kermān, Dārāb, Marvdasht, Irānshahr, and Dezfūl.[33]

Jeeroft has the highest number of *qadamgāh* shrines. In earlier times the area between Kermān and the district of Jeeroft must presumably have had a Buddhist population, and Jeeroft had ancient history of trade with India.[34] The tenth-century Masʿudī, in his *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab,* writes that when the Buddha (whom he called Budāsef) declared his message in India, he came down toward Zābūlistān, Sistān, Sindh, and then to Kermān before heading toward the region of Fārs in Iran.[35] This may be an unrealistic sketch of the historical Buddha's itinerary and

travels, but it can be assumed that Masʿudī intends to point to a high-ranking monk, *bodhisattva* (Budāsef), as the leader of the Buddhist population who spread his doctrine in the Iranian regions of Sistān, Kermān, and Fārs all the way to the littoral areas of the Persian Gulf.

In Jeeroft, most of the *qadamgāhs* have been named after various Shiʿi Imams and the rest are named after a number of Sufi Sheikhs, among them interestingly Pīr-i Kashmirī and Pīr-i Kashmirān from India. One *qadamgāh* is named after the prophet Daniel, and two are attributed to the fictional prophet Khidr.[36] The large number of scattered *qadamgāhs* in Jeeroft, given the city's connection and trade with India and around Kermān, strongly suggests the need for future research and archeological investigation about the past settlements and activities in this region, especially concerning their cultural contacts with the Indian world and Buddhism in particular.

Qadamgāh of Khidr

In the second category of actual *qadamgāh* shrines, a large number are attributed to Khidr, whose legendary life represents longevity and the fountain of youth. It will be instructive to learn more about Khidr and the circumstances that had led to many *qadamgāhs* being attributed to him as a replacement for the Buddha.

Before discussing his *qadamgāhs*, let us briefly describe the legend of Khidr, whose name is associated not only with various shrines in Iran but also with other holy sites in the Islamic world. There are no clear criteria, other than mythical reports, to establish that Khidr ever existed. A comprehensive study of Khidr and the rise and spread of his myth has been undertaken by Patrick Franke in his book of *Begegnung mit Khidr* (2000). Franke explains that the deep spiritual needs of the Muslim culture led to assigning Khidr a unique status for his long life and immortality. Khidr, according to the Muslim interpretations, has been associated with the Koranic verses dealing with Moses in *Sura* 18:60–82, but his name is nowhere to be mentioned in the Koran.[37]It is not clear how the name of Khidr as mystical mentor became associated with Moses. In the Islamic tradition, Khidr remains a mysterious personality and yet is described to be a servant of God who represents an esoteric knowledge.[38] Other inconsistent reports have Khidr associated instead with the legend of Gilgamesh, or with Alexander, who marched to the fountain of youth. In the same reports, Elijah, Idries, and even Jesus (believed to still be alive) are associated with Khidr because he represents immortality and long life, since Khidr's name means "green" in Arabic, referring to a living prophet.[39] According to the popular Islamic interpretation, Khidr as a spiritual intermediary coached Moses to the right path, which from the ardent Sufi point of view suggests the superiority of the mystical and spiritual wisdom of Khidr vis-à-vis the other prophets.[40]

This hidden and enigmatic prophet and master has also been mentioned in the Sufi[41] literature as the spiritual trainer and hidden mentor of certain Sufis such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham.[42] Khidr is also known as the hidden master by the Uwaysi Sufi order, whose members should be initiated by him.[43] Nasr believes that through long life, Khidr is associated not only with the Judeo-Christian tradition, but in the case of Shiʿism, with the Twelfth or Hidden Imam.[44] Furthermore, Ibn Babuya (d. 991)

and Majlisī (d. 1699), both Shiʿi theologians, based their claims about him on Shiʿi *hadīths* that say ʿAli as well as his descendants had met with Khidr on many occasions, and that Khidr's longevity is living proof of the long life of the Hidden Imam since he continues to remain in *ghayba* (occultation).[45]

Some Islamic sources offer interesting connections between Khidr and the Buddha. Shahristānī, of the twelfth century, believed Khidr to be the same person as the Buddha, which he suggested various Muslim scholars had tried to establish.[46] In addition, another similar Buddhist legend is chronicled by Abu Rifāʾa al-Fārisī (d. 902), which appeared in the work of Thaʿlabī for the first time, according to Franke. In this legend Khidr is depicted as a prince who had fled the palace of his father and had given himself to continuous meditation and prayers as a celibate ascetic in India. This is identified as being synonymous with the Buddha legend during a period when the Buddha legend was being adapted in various Islamic or Christian ascetic literature.[47] Here Khidr's life and wisdom were adapted to the life and teachings of the Buddha. The connection between Khidr and the Buddha in the Islamic literature is rather convoluted, but an Islamic source implies such a connection. The ninth-century al-Bukhārī reportedly offers a *hadīth* about Khidr that plays upon Khidr's name, which means "green." The *hadīth* says, "Because he sat upon white herbage under which green foliage sprouted forth." The same was said about the Buddha, "Walking upon large white lotus flowers with green foliage under them."[48] Khidr, as a fictional prophet, was found suitable to replace the figure of the Buddha, whose person and doctrine were not mentionable in the Islamic world.

It also seems the name *Khidr* became a convenient and broad cover for identifying and legitimating a good number of Buddhist shrines or caves, whether in Sri Lanka or in the Persian Gulf region. According to Ibn Battuta's travel account, a cave near the Buddha's footprint at Adam's Peak had been given the name *Khidr*.[49] The frequent occurrence of the name *Khidr* for sacred places in Sri Lanka and the Persian Gulf seems to have been an easy choice for the previously Buddhist sites. Given the historical trade and maritime relations between Buddhist Sri Lanka and the Persian Gulf area of Iran, the cross-influences, especially related to Buddhism, are perhaps deeper than previously assumed.[50] During the Islamization of various sites in the Persian Gulf regions and Sri Lanka, it is presumed that both nations' Muslims in those areas simultaneously chose the designation of Khidr for certain Buddhist shrines, since the introduction of the fictional Khidr required no concrete proof. Perhaps due to the presence of a Hindu-Buddhist population in the Persian Gulf it is not irrelevant to mention that in modern times there is a Hindu-Buddhist shrine in Bandar ʿAbbās established in 1931 seemingly built on top of the old shrine with defaced images of the Buddha and other Hindu deities. Today in this temple the images of the Buddha and other Indian deities are at display.

Because Khidr is not supposed to have any "real" burial place,[51] a number of *qadamgāh*s have been attributed to him instead.[52] According to the survey, the 11 *qadamgāhs* attributed to Khidr are in Jeeroft and around Kermān as well as in Bandar ʿAbbās. His *qadamgāh* also appears in Hormuz Island. Other shrines attributed to Khidr can be found in Ābādān, Chāhbahār in Iran, and near Kabul.[53]

The *qadamgāhs* arbitrarily attributed to Khidr in southern Iran as well as *qadamgāhs* attributed to other holy men on Hormuz Island and in Bushir,[54] Bandar Dayr, and

Bandar Langeh, all of which had maritime connections with Sri Lanka and India, may have been associated with settlements of Buddhist merchants and missionaries[55] Several unspecified shrines (*būqq'a*) are attributed to Khidr in the Persian Gulf cities.[56] In the south and on several Persian Gulf islands, the structure of some of these shrines of Khidr has a typical Buddhist stūpa shape. This architectural similarity calls for deeper archaeological and anthropological scrutiny to trace cultural and religious interchange between the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf areas.

The phenomenon of attributing *qadamgāh* to nonworldly holy figures raises even more skepticism about the nature and the earlier history of these shrines and footprints in Iran. In addition to Khidr, another hidden personality has footprints attributed to him: the Shiʿi Hidden or Twelfth Imam, who is not present in the world. This hidden Imam of Shiʿism is believed to have left his footprints in a number of places in Iran. About 18 *qadamgāhs* are attributed to him. Although in some of the areas where these 18 footprints are found, they are named vaguely after all 12 Imams (*Qadamgāh-i Davāzdah Imām*), presumably symbolically.[57]

The *qadamgāhs* named after Khidr raise greater doubts about their authenticity. It is clear that practicing and religiously believing folks have never needed much historical evidence to validate their faith and performance of rituals. But in order to make it historically more verifiable, the possible Buddhist origin of the "Khidr" footprints in the Persian Gulf needs further research.

Qadamgāh of Imam Reza

It is worth taking a closer look at a *qadamgāh* connected with Imam Reza, the eighth Shiʿi Imam, who immigrated from Medina to Iranian Khurāsān at the invitation of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph Ma'mūn (r. 813–833). Imam Reza finally settled in Nūqān (present-day Mashhad in northeastern Iran) and died there in 818. This important Shiʿi Imam's footprints could be argued to have a more realistic status because he actually is believed to have set foot in Iran and have traveled there for real.

To trace Imam Reza's itinerary from his entry point in the southwestern province of Khūzistān[58] in Iran, including his stopovers in villages and towns across the country, we find a series of sacred *qadamgāhs* attributed to him. There are also a large number of *qadamgāhs* in various provinces in Iran attributed to his descendants. The scattered *qadamgāhs* appear in many areas, all the way from Isfahān in central Iran to the north and east including the cities of Sabzevār, Semnān, Shāhrūd, Dāmghān, Neishābur, and Mashhad.

A chronological and geographical survey of Imam Reza's path across Iran following the route of the *qadamgāhs* was published by the Foundation of Āstān Qūds-i Razavī of Mashhad under the title of *Jogrāphiyā-ye Tārīkhī-i Hejrat Imām Rezā az Madineh tā Marv* (*Historical Geography of Imam Reza's Migration from Medina to Marv*) in 2008. In this publication, the surveyors could not solve the mystery of all the scattered and random *qadamgāhs* attributed to the Imam, which sometimes are located tens or hundreds of kilometers outside of his main itinerary. This inconsistency is greater for his travel portion between Fārs province and Khurāsān. In the general survey of the Imam's route, the *qadamgāhs* in Khūzistān province are located in the cities of Shūshtar and Dezfūl. These *qadamgāhs* are considered to be

highly venerated, but also, as revealed by the surveyors, of ambiguous and uncertain authenticity.[59] On the periphery of these two cities there are about ten other shrines attributed to Imam Reza for one reason or another. These shrines contain neither any physical tomb nor footprints. The identity and function of these shrines in pre-Islamic times cannot be confirmed. The publication of the Āstān Quds Razavī Foundation considers these shrines, despite their religious significance for the pilgrims, baseless, undocumented, and ambiguous.[60]

The foundation continued to conduct its survey along the Imam's path. The Imam's next destination after Khūzistān was the city of Yazd, on the periphery of which are several *qadamgāhs* attributed to him. One of the *qadamgāhs* around Yazd is in Kharāneq (or Mash-hadak), 60 kilometers outside of Yazd. The other one is in Farāshāh, where the Buyid dynasty[61] of the eleventh century allegedly ordered a shrine to be built for this *qadamgāh.* The authenticity of these two *qadamgāhs* has been a matter of controversy among Shiʿi researchers.[62] In addition to the *qadamgāhs*, there are several shrines attributed to the brothers of Imam Reza in Yazd.

The next stopover of Imam Reza was the important city of Nā'in in the central part of Iran. The *qadamgāh* in Bāqirān (five kilometers outside of Nā'in), and several more *qadamgāhs* in Nā'in, are considered to be his footprints, although the early historical records do not mention the Imam's passage between Bāqirān and Nā'in.[63] The oldest mosque of Nā'in is believed to be a former Zoroastrian fire temple, and the stone-carved *qadamgāh* is located on the southeastern corner of this mosque.[64] Nā'in is on the way from Fārs to Neishābur. There is, however, another route from Fārs to Neishābur that does not pass through Nā'in. Having *qadamgāhs* both in Nā'in and on the other road leading to Neishābur all attributed to Imam Reza is contradictory; it is geographically impossible for the Imam to have traveled both roads. In other words, Imam Reza, despite all the *qadamgāhs* attributed to him, may not have passed through Nā'in and its vicinity at all.[65] Having said that, the authenticity of the footprints in Nā'in and the presence of a village named Nawbahār nearby suggest that the *qadamgāhs* in the vicinity could be the work of the Buddhist communities there. This may further corroborate the account of Masʿudī, who reports about the seven great ancient idol temples or Nawbahārs, of which one was located near Isfahān (in the vicinity of Nā'in) on a hilltop with a number of idols until the Zoroastrians took over the temple.[66]

There are six more *qadamgāhs* in Bandar ʿAbbās, six in Mīnāb, and one in Jeeroft.[67] These areas are located to the south and east of the Imam's actual route and also cannot be defensibly attributed to him.

The most famous stone-carved *qadamgāh* is located 26 kilometers from the city of Neishābur, in a small town with the actual name Qadamgāh. It is said that when Imam Reza stood to pray on the stone, his feet made impressions on it, although Shiʿi critical commentators believe the footprints were carved later, based on where the Imam actually stood.

Another stone-carved footprint exists in the suburb of Neishābur at the tomb of Imāmzāda Mahrūq, where Omar Khayyam's mausoleum is located.[68] In the area of the *qadamgāh* shrine, there is also an old tree on which local people would tie ribbons and adorn it with garlands as a *dirakht-i muqaddas* (holy tree). This venerating ritual is considered un-Islamic and was recently banned by the religious



Figure 5.2 The Footprints (*Qadamgāh*) of Imam Reza, Qadamgāh, Iran

authorities. The source of influence in this case and in other cases in the Iranian religious culture of revering "holy trees" is most likely the Indian custom of the "holy tree" as well as the Buddhist veneration of the Bodhi Tree, in conjunction with the Manichaean, Mazdaki, and Zoroastrian icon of *sarv* (the cypress tree) as a symbol of evergreen life.[69]

Another interesting observation through the Buddhist lens is that on the boulevard at the entrance to the town of Qadamgāh there is a small structure made out of some rocks with three deer in different positions standing on them. Next to the deer there is a sign saying *zāmin-i āhoo* (the life-redeemer of deer, referring to Imam Reza). A tale of the Buddha redeeming the life of a deer from a hunter appears in the Buddhist literature. Thus before moving further with the discussion of *qadamgāh*s in other parts of Iran it is perhaps appropriate here to address the deer legend linked to the Buddha and its adaptation to Shi'i culture and to Imam Reza.

The Deer Iconography in Buddhism and Islam

In connection with Imam Reza it is relevant to discuss the significance of deer representation, briefly, both in Buddhism and Islam. In Buddhism the deer is of high importance both in iconography and in Buddhist stories or *jatākas*.[70] Surrounded

by a herd of deer, in a place commonly known as Deer Park in Śarnath, the Buddha delivered his sermon about the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Path. There are a number of wall paintings from the eighth and ninth centuries from Central Asia showing the Buddha seated in the center with a pair of deer, one on each side.[71] Sometimes the two deer appear at the foot of the Buddha's lotus throne. There is also a legend that the Buddha once set free a deer trapped in a net. The deer-hunter at first was very angry to have lost his prey, but after listening patiently to the words of the Buddha about the consequences that would ensue through *karma* and consecutive rebirths, as reasons why he should not kill the deer or any other sentient beings, the hunter was dissuaded and his anger was alleviated.[72] The theme of the Buddha and the deer-hunter appears in a painting found in one of the caves on a cliff in Bāmīyān known as Kakrak.[73] In this regard Farrokhī, the eleventh-century Persian poet, makes a reference to the images of deer in the Buddhist temple:

> ... Choose a deer resembling a beauty from the temple of Farkhar.[74]

The two facing deer on each side of the Wheel of Dharma became an iconic symbol of the Buddha's teaching and Buddhism.[75] The sculpture of deer and the Wheel of Dharma is still used above the entrance gates of many stūpas, vihāras, and monasteries in Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, and Nepal. (In this connection one is also reminded of the two golden-plated deer in the pre-Islamic Ka'ba, as will be mentioned in the next chapter.)

In the Islamic era, the theme of the Buddha dissuading the deer hunter from killing his prey was somehow adapted to and linked with Imam Reza at a time when traces of Buddhism and its culture were purged in Khurāsān. The same tale of the deer and hunter appeared in Shi'i pictorial iconography that stemmed from Khurāsān. As time went by and Shi'ism became consolidated, representations of the deer tale continued to appear in paintings, carpet motifs, and, in the last century, in poster form in Iran. The depiction usually contains an image of Imam Reza with a halo of light in the background, with his face either shown or veiled, with a deer at his side facing a hunter holding a bow and arrow. The Imam has raised the palm of his hand toward the hunter, persuading him to let go of his prey, with the caption "*zāmin-i āhoo*" (the life-redeemer of deer). Other paintings show the Imam seated with two deer at his feet. These and other deer legends have exact Buddhist parallels.

One particularly intriguing parallel involves a village containing an Imam Reza *qadamgāh.* This village in northeastern Iran is the source of a fascinating tale that can be compared with its Buddhist parallel. The village, 40 kilometers from Semnān, near Dāmghān, is called Āhovān (meaning "Deer Park"—*āhoo* being the singular of deer in Persian). In the Shi'i version of the story, this was the village where a deer paid homage to Imam Reza while visiting there and informed him about a conspiracy against his life. Thanks to the forewarning from the deer, the Imam was rescued from the danger.[76] Another version only mentions that the Imam saved the life of a deer as described in the tale above, and thus the village assumed the name of Āhovān.[77] This village lies at an elevation of nearly 2,000 meters, and to the east of it near the old caravansary, there are the ruins of a stūpa-shaped square

structure built of stone and round towers in each side.[78] Curiously this village also used to hold several holy unnamed mausolea mentioned by Mostaufī in the fourteenth century.[79]

The parallel *jatāka* or Buddhist story, which was also represented in a painting, tells of the Buddha being incarnated as a deer in order to unravel a murder conspiracy and save a person from the king's wrath.[80] Even the name of the Iranian village, Āhovān ("Deer Park"), is reminiscent of Deer Park in Śarnath, outside Benares, where the Buddha delivered his first sermon.

These tales offer evidence of a Buddhist influence on the Iranian and Shi'i religious culture and iconography. The religious purpose of the Islamized deer legend may have been a subliminal attempt to also show the antiviolence and nonslaughtering side of Shi'ism represented by Imam Reza—a rather appealing face of Shi'i versus the "warring Sunni Islam." While the Imam's rescue of the deer must have touched the hearts of many Shi'i people, no one seems to have noticed why an identical legend was found in the neighboring Buddhist communities.

More *Qadamgāhs*

Let us now briefly discuss the third category of *qadamgāhs*, those located near villages with the name Nawbahār, which means "Buddhist monastery." The combination of a *qadamgāh* and a village named Nawbahār together serves as a strong indication that in the past, the footprint and a Buddhist monastery were a sacred combination to maintain for pilgrims. The number of occurrences of the combination of Nawbahārs and *qadamgāhs* in the districts of Sabzevār and Neishābur is significant because both cities lie on the Silk Route in Khurāsān, and close to the Buddhist world. As will be mentioned in the next chapter on Nawbahār, there are more than a dozen villages around Mashhad, Neishābur, and Sabzevār with the name Nawbahār. In the same areas one encounters numerous *qadamgāhs* attributed either to Imam Reza or to other Shi'i holy figures. Additionally, the districts of Beerjand, Isfahān, and Nā'īn have both Nawbahār villages and *qadamgāhs* together.

The combination of *qadamgāh* and Nawbahār in one area may be enough reason to spur future archeological investigation in order to track down the buried Buddhist heritage in these areas of Iran. The investigation must date and separate the *qadamgāhs* carved and left before the coming of Islam to the area from the ones possibly created later by the Shi'ites.

Conclusion

The tenets of Mohammad's prophecy and Islam rejected all physical objects of veneration and replaced them with an unseen God, assumed to be sufficient for all future Muslims of diverse cultures. But Iran did not completely reject all the pre-Islamic religious relics of veneration. Not only did Iran not eradicate them, but the people culturally adjusted them so that they remained compatible with the Shi'i narrative. Various forms of religious veneration were kept alive in Iran as part of the culture that stemmed from the pre-Islamic period. The *qadamgāh* has become a symbol of such continuity. It is a visible sign of acculturation or imitative

adaptation—of selecting a Buddhist icon and creatively presenting it in the context of Islam. It is highly conceivable that there were only a few authentic *qadamgāhs* left behind from the Buddhist period, particularly in Neishābur, Khurāsān, and the Persian Gulf regions, but then the promoters of Shi'i Islam likely replicated more footprints of holy figures in other obscure villages and areas in order to attract pilgrims who were accustomed to and probably comforted by the practice of venerating such shrines. And so it was that the legacy of Buddhism did not completely die out in Iran; only its façade changed. Pilgrims, whether Buddhist or Shi'i, have continued to venerate unmarked footprints in a ritual whose origin remains outside of Islamic observance.

PART II. THE "BUDDHIST" CAVES IN IRAN

The knowledge of the many deserted caves around towns and villages of Iran has been erased from the historical memory of average people and even those presently living near those caves. In certain areas, people tend to associate the caves' occupancy with either pre-historic or *kāfir* (pagan) people. There is a tantalizing uncertainty among Muslims about the identity and purpose of hundreds of abandoned caves throughout Iran. In this section we examine the Buddhist identity of a number of caves in order to gain an alternative understanding of them. There are a number of rock-cut caves in the foothills spread through different parts of Iran that can only be assumed, based on previous studies, to have been built for Buddhist monastic and meditative purposes.

THE HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF CAVES

The perception of caves in religious traditions suggests a nearly archetypal presence of the idea of a cave, and this archetype is understood in a variety of ways among religions. Zoroastrianism and Islam never maintained a cave-dwelling or monastic culture, except for certain early Islamic ascetics and Sufis who used caves for meditation. In the Zoroastrian tradition, caves in ancient *Avestan* legends have a negative connotation and were considered to be hideouts for the enemy, whereas for the Hindu-Buddhists, caves have served as an allegorical spiritual abode provided by the gods for the renunciates, an abode that makes them protected and oblivious to danger.[81] Although the "cave theme" has historical associations with Mithra and mithraistic as well as Christian and Sufi practices, it has a greater importance in Buddhism than in other Iranian and Near Eastern practices.[82]

Cave-sitting meditation became an ongoing tradition in Buddhism. The historical cave in which the Buddha meditated in Rajgir is a representative of the cave-dwelling culture of the future Buddhist mendicants. One of the classic Buddhist icons in the Gandhāran art of the Kushān period is the Buddha shown in the shadow of a cave, since the theme and practice of meditation in a cave was so significant in Buddhism.[83]

The use of caves in Buddhism has been more widespread than in other religions and doctrines since caves have served as monastic cells as well as shrines and pagodas. The Buddhists generally have a long history of carving monasteries into the

cliffs of mountains; examples can still be seen at Bezelik on the periphery of the Takalamakan desert.[84] The Buddhist caves in Sri Lanka and in Bodhgayā, India, are also representative of the Buddhist cave-dwelling tradition. The tradition of rock-cut caves or monastic cave cells in Afghanistan has also been determined to be Buddhist, coming out of Afghanistan's longstanding hosting of Buddhism. The cave complexes in Afghanistan, such as in Tappe Sardār and Tappe Zaitūn in Ghazni province, in Bāmīyān (1,000 caves), in Jalālābād (180 caves), in Filkhāna, in Balkh, and the rock-cut stūpa and monastery in Haibak (200 caves) between Tāshgurkān and Pul-i-Khumrī at Takhte Rustam[85] have similarities with rock-cut caves in Iran, which indicates that similar caves in Iran were also used by Buddhist monks. Many of the 750 rock-cut Buddhist caves along the 1,300-meter cliff near the colossal Buddha statues in Bāmīyān were still inhabited by the local people in the nineteenth century.[86] These Buddhist caves have been connected with staircases cut in the rock, and about 50 of the caves have mural paintings with themes such as buddhas, bodhisattvas, and various *jātakas*.[87]

Even when Iran was officially under Zoroastrian and later Islamic religious control, Buddhism found its way into the vast Iranian territory through missionaries and commerce via the Silk and Spice Routes, and it seems likely that Buddhist monks would have also been part of the population; their monastic practices would have involved making caves. Furthermore, Buddhism became established as an important doctrine under the Il-Khan Mongols in the thirteenth century, and monks predictably pursued monastic and cave life during this period as well. Thus it should not be surprising to attribute some of the caves in Iran to the hermetic Buddhists, whether from the pre-Islamic or Mongol periods. The difficulty in establishing with certainty the identity of the caves in Iran, unlike in Afghanistan, lies in the complete destruction of their Buddhist features, including traces such as statues and mural paintings. In this section we shall discuss a number of caves that have already been surveyed in Marāgheh in the Persian Gulf region near Sultānīya, as well as a number of the forgotten caves in Māzandarān that have been visited by this author, in connection with their possible hermetic Buddhist character.

Five sets of caves have been studied. Two are in and near Marāgheh in Azarbaijān province, which became the first capital of the Buddhist Il-Khānids in 1260. Two other sets are around the Persian Gulf, probably built by merchant and missionary settlers who traveled by sea between India and the Gulf. The fifth set of caves is in Qonqor Olong near Sultānīya, the last capital of the Il-Khans. Another set of caves is in Pul-i Moon and Ab-i Ask in Māzandarān Province, which shall be presented in brief below. Other scattered caves will be mentioned for their possible Buddhist identity.

1. Marāgheh Caves

The first two cave complexes are in Rasadkhāna on the foothill overlooking Marāgheh,[88] and in Varjuvī, a small village six kilometers south of Marāgheh. At Varjuvī there are not only caves but also a mausoleum, Imāmzāda Maʿsum. This mausoleum is believed to be built on the site of an older sanctuary (perhaps a Mihrī Temple, or a Tibetan-style Buddhist monastery).[89] Despite the Zoroastrian, Mihrī, Christian, and Mazdaki[90] hypotheses about the identity of these caves, their similarities to other

Buddhist caves in Afghanistan and their geographical location near Marāgheh where Mongol Buddhism was first established make their identity more likely Buddhist than anything else. These caves resemble the rock-cut Buddhist monuments found in Afghanistan and Central Asia, especially Turkistan.[91] The similarities between the architectural patterns of the caves in Marāgheh and the Central Asian ones stem from the coming of the Mongols to western Iran, leaving behind their Central Asian Chagatai counterpart in the mid-thirteenth century and enabling the immigration of Buddhist monks from Turkistan to Marāgheh and Tabriz.

Like his cousin Kublai Khan in China, Hülagü, the founder of the Il-Khānid Mongol dynasty in Iran, had converted to Buddhism. After destroying the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Baghdad in 1258, he made Marāgheh his capital in 1260 and declared Buddhism to be one of the country's new religions. He ordered the building of Buddhist monasteries in Iran. Thus Marāgheh was populated with Buddhist monks and practitioners for at least the next 40 years. Among the foreign population in Azarbaijān there were even some Chinese, including astronomers working with the famous Iranian astronomer Nasīr al-Dīn Tusī in Marāgheh.[92] After Hülagü, the next Mongol monarch, Arghūn, ordered the building of more Buddhist monasteries.[93] Given this expansion of Buddhism in Iran, we have little reason to doubt that the caves in the Marāgheh region were cut for meditation and monastic purposes by Buddhist monks.

According to the study of W. Ball, the caves at Rasadkhāna consist of a complex of 15 interconnected chambers. The exterior parts have been damaged, but in the center of each chamber there are two platforms on which to place an object of devotion. The similarity of these caves to the caves near the Persian Gulf, especially Chehelkhāna, and their overall functioning structure as a monastery are similar to the Buddhist caves of Central Asia.[94] Some chambers have a rock-cut raised table-like platform in the center for circumambulatory purposes, as also seen in the Buddhist caves of Turkistan.[95] The status and appearance of the Varjuvī caves in Marāgheh, however, remain underreported, despite the fact that their Buddhist identity can clearly be based on Marāgheh being the capital of Buddhism in the mid-thirteenth century in Iran. Both of these cave complexes represent the westernmost extent of Buddhism in Iran. Despite the fact that neither set of caves in Marāgheh shows any Buddhist epigraphy, mural paintings, or other iconic signs, their nature is still suggestive of being Buddhist because Buddhism was established in that region. Moreover, as much as the shrine of Imāmzāda Maʿsum in Marāgheh has been Islamized (believed to be the tomb of the wife of a local dignitary[96]), this old temple should be investigated for a possible Buddhist identity as well.

2. Persian Gulf Caves

The next two cave complexes that have been studied in the Persian Gulf region are known as Chehelkhāna and Kalāt Haidarī. These caves were first photographed and published by Ahmad Iqtidāri in Iran in 1969. Then in the 1970s and the 1980s, W. Ball published a series of articles sharing the results of his investigation into these two cave complexes. These two sites near the Persian Gulf were accessible by sea travelers and were most likely hospitable to Indian and Buddhist settlers. Furthermore, it seems that the character and distinctive features of the caves demonstrate that they were used for monastic purposes and not merely for accommodation.

The Persian Gulf area is significant for its maritime exchanges with the Hindu-Buddhist world, as evidenced by the many historical ruins left behind, among which are the caves and ruins of stūpa-like shrines on the hilltops. The Chehelkhāna caves are located 70 kilometers inland from Bushir, halfway between the villages of Zīr Rāh and Sa'dābād, on the eastern bank of the Shāpūr river, and to the north of the caves there is the village of Barmak. Having a village nearby named Barmak is noteworthy, since, as mentioned in the chapter on Nawbahār, Barmak means Buddhist high priest.[97] The village may be named after the Barmakid family who rose to power during the 'Abbāsid era, especially Khālid b. Barmak (d. 781), who was assigned as the governor of the Fars territory that extends to the Persian Gulf. Naming a village after the Barmak family, who were originally Buddhist, could also imply that the village and the areas surrounding it, including the caves, had possibly a Buddhist heritage.

The Chehelkhāna caves are three stories high, with 30 chambers visible from the front and several other chambers to the back, requiring a scaling ladder and rope for access. Many of the rectangular chambers have large devotional niches. The passages join up in the front and the back in order to allow the ritual of circumambulation.[98] Outside of the caves on the front part of the cliff, there is an elliptical carving with a platform, the Buddha's seat; a similar pattern can be seen in other cave complexes.[99] Such sitting platforms on the cliff were perceived by Iqtidārī to be the seat of the king (*shāh neshīn*).[100]

In these caves there are no writings or dates. Ball believes the Chehelkhāna caves belong to the Sasanid/early Islamic period and were used for monastic purposes.[101] These caves could have been used during the Buddhist era of the Il-Khan period as well. The structure and cut design of these caves resemble those of the Buddhist caves in eastern Afghanistan and India[102] as well as the caves in Kalāt Haidarī near Bushir.

The cave complex in Kalāt Haidarī, 60 kilometers southeast of Bushir, is suggested to date back to between the third and tenth centuries.[103] These caves are at the foothills of the Kūh-i Mand near the coast of the Persian Gulf. On the cliff there are 14 semicircular openings with a corridor that connects the front with the back. What is distinctive enough to be noticed on first glance is that on the cliff there is a large elliptical cut rock with a raised platform under the arch as the seat for the statue of the Buddha. Some of the niches, according to local people, contained "images" that were taken away by "a foreigner."[104]

It has been speculated that these caves were briefly used by Nestorian Christian monks.[105] Not far from these caves stands an old mosque called Masjid Sangī (Stone Mosque). There is speculation that the mosque had connections with the Nestorian communities, but the mosque has all the hallmarks of a Buddhist monastery.[106] It is built into a hilltop with a main entrance and several adjacent small entrances, which are in fact tunnels, all accessing the main hall. In the vicinity of Masjid Sangī, the caves of Kalāt Haidarī have more features of Buddhist architecture than Christian. Iqtidārī, in his survey in the 1960s, also perceived the Kalāt Haidarī caves to be more like a Buddhist or Hindu temple.[107] The Arabic inscription carved on the walls and the adjustment of the *qibla* toward Mecca was probably undertaken in the thirteenth century after the Mongol conversion to Islam.[108]

There is another series of caves in the Persian Gulf region that may be related to the medieval Indo-Iranian sea trade, particularly around Sīrāf. Sīrāf, 220 kilometers

east of Bushir on the Persian Gulf coast, is a legendary port whose history goes back to the Sasanid era.[109] In regard to Sīrāf, we are concerned with two distinctive aspects that may indicate a Buddhist origin for the caves: the similarities of the caves of Sīrāf [110] to the caves of Chehelkhāna and Kalāt Haidarī, and a village near Sīrāf and Bandar Dayr that is called Botkhāna[111] ("idol temple"). On the hilltop in the area of Botkhāna is the ruin of a rectangular stūpa-shape structure measuring 60 by 180 meters, and 30 meters high, with bulges on the roof and a damaged dome on the top,[112] features that make this temple almost undisputedly a historically Buddhist temple similar to the cubical-structured stūpas in Afghanistan. This building on the hilltop in Iran is known locally to have been a center of learning in ancient times.[113] The combination of Buddhist-style caves and a village named *Botkhāna* with a stūpa-like temple on the hilltop lead us to believe that this area may have been inhabited by the Buddhists in ancient times when there was trading between Sīrāf and other Persian Gulf ports and India. This trade declined in the Islamic period,[114] although the Indian products reached Sīrāf even up to the tenth century.[115]

The caves in and around Sīrāf may be related to the longstanding connection with the Buddhist world via the Indian Ocean. Owing to the strong presence of and exchanges with Indians in the Persian Gulf regions, there are even Indian names there, for instance, in Basra where the mouth of the river to the Gulf, the nearest point to India, is still called "Hind."[116] Excavations in the Gulf areas and eastern Arabia also indicate a relationship with India from ancient times.[117] In the account of the seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Hsūan-tsang it was the Buddhists who would trade in the Persian Gulf areas.[118] Furthermore, Sīrāf as a Sasanid[119] and medieval Persian Gulf port (on the Spice Route) maintained trade with Buddhist China, Sri Lanka, and India until Sīrāf had an earthquake in 977.[120]

There are other caves scattered around the Persian Gulf that deserve to be acknowledged. At Bandar Tis near Chāhbahār there are two sets of rock-cut caves. Inside them is a large space for a dome-shaped structure.[121] In the caves and on their walls are writings in scripts other than Arabic and Persian that point to the Indian and pre-Islamic heritage of these caves. Communities of Buddhists had settled in Bandar Tis in the past because of its proximity to the Indian world (present-day Pakistan).[122] These caves could have been used by the Buddhist monks at Tis and Chāhbahār in pre-Islamic times.

A series of additional caves exists along the Persian Gulf littoral in the Nāband region on the road to Kūshknār-Gāvbandī, near Humairān.[123] These caves need to be further investigated for their monastic characteristics and functions.

In general, the caves of the Persian Gulf region, given their similarities to one another and to the caves in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and India, speak of the presence of Buddhist missionaries, monks, and merchants who had settled in those areas. The cave architecture for circumambulatory and monastic purposes in the cliffs of mountains, the details of the niches and platforms for placing the Buddha statue and other devotional objects, and having place names such as Bahār, Bahāristān, Butkhāna, and Barmak nearby as well as stūpa-shaped shrines in the areas near the caves are all evidence that these caves were Buddhist[124]and thus rule out the Nestorian occupancy of these centers. Largely that is because the Nestorian monastic caves would not have had the circumambulatory and other distinctly Buddhist features.

3. Sultānīya Caves

The next set of caves believed to be Buddhist was reported by G. Scarcia in the mid-1970s and revisited by A. Azad almost 20 years later. These caves are found near Sultānīya, on the northern slope of Kūh-i Rustam, about two kilometers southeast of the village of Vīār. They are said to have been rock-cut by the legendary poetical figure Farhād for his beloved Shīrīn and the caves are known as *Utāq-i Farhād*.[125] They are reached only by rock-carved steps, and the structural, stylistic, and iconographical features that Scarcia describe point to a Buddhist complex of the Il-Khānid period of the thirteenth century.[126]

The caves are in the vicinity of Vīār, a name that may derive directly from the Sanskrit *vihār* for Buddhist monastery. Why other names such as *bahār* or Nawbahār do not occur instead of Vīār can be explained by the presence of Tibetan Buddhist lamas in Iran during the early Il-Khānid period who could have chosen *vihār* for the monastery over the local name, *bahār*. And thus the name Vīār[127] (Vihār), a village near Sultānīya, can be assumed to be a corrupted form of the word *vihār.* In this same area Arghūn founded Sultānīya and built a magnificent "stūpa-like" structure that still stands as a landmark of the area.

These inaccessible caves near Sultānīya are in the regions of Safīd Kūh overlooking Vīār, where there is also a sacred well in the valleys of Qonqor-olong. This well is believed to be guarded by a dragon, and a local ritual is that periodically shepherds sacrifice sheep there. The idea of the dragon may have to do with a large pair of carved dragons on the rock, believed to be the work of Chinese or Central Asian artists brought to the area during the Il-Khan era.[128] Near the caves on top of the mountain there is a shrine (*zīyārat-gāh*) attributed to Imam 'Ali.[129]

The Islamization process after Ghāzān Khan's conversion from Buddhism to Islam obscured and diverted the accurate accounts of these caves as well as the intention behind building the Sultānīya structure and the shrine on the mountaintop. The proximity of the caves in question to the nearby village of Vīār in the vicinity of the Buddhist capital of the Il-Khans points to their Buddhist and monastic function. Again, no other Buddhist iconic elements have survived other than a pair of carved dragons that must have seemed innocuous to the iconoclastic Muslims. As suggested by Azad in her studies of these caves, more evidence should surface after thorough archaeological excavations to give credence to the Buddhist nature of the shrines and caves.

4. Pul-i Moon Caves

Pul-i Moon is a town in Māzandarān province, about 120 kilometers east of Tehran on the Harāz road, which goes to Āmol, Sabzevār, and further to the east and heartland of Khurāsān. The caves of Pul-i Moon are located on the eastern plain of Damāvand Mountain. These rock-cut caves on the cliffs of the northeastern slope of Damāvand Mountain are architecturally designed to face the rising sun of the early morning, and they continue to catch the light all the way to late afternoon. The location of these caves is also a short walking distance to the river down below. These caves are in three interconnected levels with 30 openings of different sizes. Once inside the caves, one could have reached the higher floors via carved ladder-like stairs that are now worn out. The connections between the numerous rooms

(about 60 of them) are through corridors. Each room is of a different size and has a platform on which to place objects. The original layers of the walls have been scraped off, perhaps to remove artwork or mural paintings or even carved icons. Outside on the cliffs of the hill one large arch-shaped niche is carved whose purpose may have been to hold a statue. All around the cliffs there are close to 100 scraped-out holes, as if some objects were removed and their traces destroyed.

The local people call these caves *kāfir kelī*, which means "pagan nests" in the local language of Māzanī. The local consensus is that these caves were once occupied by non-Muslims. The religious and monastic nature of these caves as well as their external signs indicate that this cave complex may have contained various icons and statues, all pointing to the possible occupancy of these caves by Buddhists who arrived via the Silk Route from Central Asia.

Only three kilometers to the west, in Āb-i Ask, another set of seven to ten caves shares similar features. Some of these caves are used by the villagers to keep their sheep and goats. The narrow path leading to the more remote caves has been washed away and has made access to farther-away caves dangerously difficult if not impossible. Another iconic sign of the area is a shrine hanging vertically on a cliff not far from Pul-i Moon and Āb-i Ask by the roadside (before the tunnel). This inaccessible shrine in the vicinity of the caves must have been part of the community's complex for prayers and meditation.

Even though assumed, but in the absence of any concrete physical evidence, no definite conclusion can be drawn that these caves at Pul-i Moon and Āb-i Ask were used by monastic Buddhist practitioners in the past. However, the cave-dwelling life and the propagation of Buddhism on the Silk Route and the settlements of the



Figure 5.3 The Cave Complex in Pul-i Moon, Mazandaran, Iran

missionaries coming from Central Asia and Afghanistan via the medieval road passing through Neishābur, Sabzevār, Āmol, Pul-i Moon, and Āb-i Ask toward Rayy and further west makes it highly likely. These cave settlers chose areas to carve their monastic caves where there was always access to water or a river, sun exposure, near the main trade route, choosing softer rocks for easier carving, and with consideration for security and inaccessibility by intruders on all sides. These criteria were used similarly by the cave monks of Bāmīyān and Balkh, as well as in present-day Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka, where Buddhist cave monasteries are still ubiquitous and usable.

More Caves

Among the many other caves in Iran are three rock-cut caves near the village of Qal'a' Jūq, 105 kilometers east of Hamadān in Western Iran. These caves are cut in the cliff of a rocky hill in a valley. From the photographs and descriptions of these caves, the major one on the right side opens to a corridor almost 17 meters long with a number of equal-sized chambers on both sides of the corridor. Outside on the cliff, almost nine meters away from the opening to the corridor, an elliptical-shaped niche and a platform is carved for the seat of a statue;[130] it is designed such that the icon could be seen from a distance by the pilgrims.

There are a number of other scattered caves in Niāsar, 43 kilometers west of Kāshān,[131] and in Lār, in Fars province, on the road from Shiraz to Bandar 'Abbās. One of the caves of Lār that has a few inscriptions in the Indian script Devanagari is at Bonevī in the village of 'Imād Deh.[132] There is not enough information to confirm whether these caves were historically Buddhist or Hindu. About Lār, however, Ibn Battuta reported in his fourteenth-century travels to have noticed a number of renunciates there whose sheikh was named Abu Dholaf, without further indication whether they were Hindus or Buddhists.[133]

Another category of caves that requires further research is what became known as the Cave of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, near Neishābur in the valley of Haft Qār. Of note is the fact that according to the story, Ibrāhīm leaves his princely life in Balkh and retreats to meditate in a cave in Neishabur for nine years. It is highly possible that the Cave of Ibrāhīm was a Buddhist cave that was renamed after Ibrāhīm in the Islamic period. The cave in question is located in an area of Neishābur where, as indicated before, there are various villages by the name Nawbahār, another indication of the previous presence of Buddhism in the area.

In Āzarbāijān, the charming occupied cave houses in Kandovān, some 60 kilometers from Tabriz, are believed to have been carved about 700 years ago. Around this date the Buddhist Il-Khan ruled all of Āzarbāijān and beyond. The caves in Kandovān, although occupied by the local people today, demand a thorough investigation for their past and the purpose of their carving.

Conclusion

Throughout Iran many of the caves have been abandoned and became obsolete because of the eradication of all forms of monastic and esoteric culture, including Buddhism. The reasons for abandonment and challenges that these cave settlers may

have faced in Iran vary. The Zoroastrian religious politics of intolerance and the Islamic iconoclasm that followed became obstacles to the spread of Buddhism and forced the Buddhists to choose between departure and conversion. The decline and extinction of the Buddhist cave-dwellers may also have been hastened by celibacy and depopulation in a predominantly non-Buddhist environment where volunteer monks were scarce. Certainly, wars, natural disasters such as earthquakes, and local persecution were strong enough reasons for these caves to be abandoned and for the Buddhist monks to relocate to eastern territories where they could resume their monastic life.

The spiritual cave life and Buddhism were banished from Iran after the Mongol Il-Khānids' conversion to Islam in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The deserted caves of the pre-Islamic as well as the Mongol eras, however, are a reminder and symbol of monasticism that once had a safe haven for practicing the Buddha's teachings in the Iranian plateau.



Map 5.1 The Map of Iran

Chapter 6

Nawbahār and Stūpa-Like Islamic Shrines

Buddhism continued to surface in areas other than footprint relics even centuries after its physical departure from Iran. The terms used for Buddhist monasteries and stūpas have survived as names of districts and villages in Iran even up to the present. The ceremonial rituals and architectural patterns associated with Buddhist stūpas also crossed over to the Islamic period. This chapter will explore both spheres of Buddhist influence in the context of Iranian geography and Shiʿi religious culture and iconography in order to demonstrate the continuing significance of Buddhism in Iran.

Part I. The Buddhist Monastery of Nawbahār and the History Behind It

The physical and conceptual traces of Buddhism in Iran are to be found in place-names and literary metaphors transferred from the Buddhist world into Islamic Iran. In this part of our discussion, we intend to put the Bactrian name *Nawbahār* or *Bahār* (derived from Sanskrit *vihāra* or *vihār*), which stood for a Buddhist monastery, in perspective. Nawbahār continued its legacy in Iran as a name for villages and areas that may have hosted a Buddhist community with a temple in the past. In this section, *Nawbahār* and similar terms will be investigated historically and in light of present-day Iranian geography.

Nawbahār: A Geographical and Literary Inquiry

The Sanskrit word *vihār* means a Buddhist monastery. This Sanskrit name became *bahār,* a Bactrian word, in the Iranian world. During the Kushān dynasty in Khurāsān and India, *vihāras* were built in the Gandhāran art, a style, it has been argued, which is a culmination of Greco-Indo-Iranian architecture and art. Although scholars have believed that Kushān architecture was influenced by Persian architecture, especially in building *vihāras*, there is possibly an earlier source of influence.

It is the Babylonian Zigurat or hollow wooden temple, a style that may have influenced building similar *vihāras*.[1] This influence could have occurred while India maintained a link with Mesopotamia via Iran during ancient times.[2]

In the high Buddhist culture among the many great historical *vihāras,* the one in Balkh became legendary because medieval Islamic geographers and travelers wrote about this magnificent and large Buddhist monastery that came to be known as Nawbahār in Persian. The phonetic similarity between *Nawbahār* and *nava vihār* was first suggested by Sir H. Rawlinson.[3] However the author of *Kitāb Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Yāqūt (d. 1229), discusses the origin of the name. He writes that when the Nawbahār building was completed it was customary to crown the new monastery with the first plant of the spring, explaining that the tradition is why the term *naw* (meaning "new") came to be prefixed to *bahār* (monastery), to be *Nawbahār*, or "new monastery."[4]

The spread of Buddhism westward of Khurāsān, namely, in Iran proper during the Parthian rule, may have been scattered and unsystematic but was uninhibited, since historical references point to certain Parthian aristocracy converting to Buddhism. The Sasanids with their dogmatic Zoroastrianism were intolerant of Buddhism, as the settlement of Buddhist communities in Iran is indicated in the carved inscription by the Sasanid court Zoroastrian high priest Kertir.[5]

Open trade routes and a tolerant environment largely characterized the pre-Islamic era in Iran. Buddhist settlers were most likely able to live their inconspicuous lives in the vast and heterogeneous land of Iran, which lacked strict territorial borders. There was a constant flow of missionaries, merchants, and ideas across borders and along the Silk Route as well as through the sea, known as Spice Route in the Persian Gulf ports. The trade by sea with India kept the Persian Gulf ports open for intercultural exchanges with the traders and missionaries from India and the Serendīp, who must have been non-Brahmans (due to travel and dietary hygiene prohibitions adhered to by the Brahmans) among whom the Buddhist groups were industrious. Northeastern Iran maintained close contact with its Khurāsānian and Central Asian trade partners on the Silk Route. The traffic of trade caravans as well as Buddhist missionaries passing through Neishābur and Sabzevār to Rayy and to further western parts of Iran in pre-Islamic times was likely unimpeded by religious discrimination.

The amassing power of Buddhist culture during this time in Khurāsān would be unparalleled in the world. The seventh-century Chinese pilgrim Hsūan-tsang, who passed through Balkh to India, reported that Balkh had about 100 Buddhist temples with more than 3,000 monks, and it was a place where the Buddha's tooth and broomstick were kept as relics.[6] The actual date of the building of Nawbahār in Balkh cannot be determined, even though the Islamic chroniclers such as the tenth-century Masʿudī (d. 956) attribute the building of Nawbahār to the pre-Sasanid mythical king Manuchehr.[7] Various historical reports commonly mention the flourishing of Nawbahār in Balkh as a sacred place for the pilgrims, with beautifully sculpted Buddha statues draped with silk and adorned with ornaments. Masʿudī in his *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab*, as well as the twelfth-century Shahrastānī in his *al-Milal wal-Nihal*, provide accounts of seven well-known Nawbahārs and other "idol temples" known to them. These Nawbahārs were located in Balkh; Turkistan; Farghāna; on

a hilltop near Isfahān with a number of idols until the Zoroastrians took over the temple; San'a';[8] Mecca, with a number of idols imported from the Syrian region; and a temple that eventually became known as *Umayyad Mosque* in Damascus, whose site had been a church in pre-Islamic times, and in the pre-Christian era was a large monastery with several large statues.[9] Nevertheless, these medieval assertions will have to be examined against future archaeological excavations and the existing evidence.

Given how firmly Buddhism was established and the flow of traders and missionaries coming from Khurāsān, eastern Iran, and among its eastern neighbors, it is reasonable to imagine Buddhist settlements and contacts with the inner Iranian cultural life before the advent of Islam. The Isfahān region could have been populated by Buddhists during the Parthian period, which continued during the rise of the Sasanids. Conceivably, various Buddhist temples (Nawbahārs) were built in Iran proper, as the present-day geographical names indicate to us.

The Nawbahār monastery complex of Balkh was particularly impressive. Authors have described this Nawbahār as a large square-shaped temple with a domed stūpa. Ibn al-Faqīh reported in the tenth century that it was a place where the non-Arabs (*'ajam*) would keep idols (Buddha statues) and that they would fly long hanging banners (*alam*) from the top of the dome. The Nawbahār complex had 360 chambers for as many monks, each of whom would be responsible for the monastery one day per year all year round. Ibn al-Faqīh also claims that the Buddhist royalty of China and Kabul would come to Nawbahār to prostrate before the great idol of the temple.[10]

Another short historical account of Nawbahār can be found in the book of *Hūdūd al-'Ālam*, most likely composed in Khurāsān around 982 C.E. by an anonymous author. This source is the only one of its kind that mentions the magnificent paintings and art in the temple of Nawbahār.[11] Colorful artwork was (and still is) customary in a Buddhist monastery. E. G. Browne quotes *Athār ul-Bilād* by Qazvīnī (d. 1283), a physician, astronomer, and geographer who described Nawbahār: "The Persians and Turks used to revere it [Nawbahār] and perform pilgrimage and present offerings to it. Its length was one hundred cubits [almost 48 meters],[12] its breadth the same, and its height somewhat more, and the care of it was invested in the Baramika. The kings of India and China used to come to it, and when they reached it they worshipped the idol, and kissed Barmak's hand, and Barmak's rule was paramount in all these lands."[13] The description of Nawbahār in medieval times was always accompanied by an account of the Barmakid family and their affiliation as Buddhist high priests. The intriguing connection between the Buddhist monastery of Balkh and the Barmakids who became involved with the politics in Baghdad and Islam demands closer scrutiny here.

Nawbahār-Ka'ba and the Buddhist Barmakid

Owing to the significance of the Nawbahār complex from an architectural as well as iconographical point of view, the Islamic chroniclers did not neglect this edifice or the alluring history behind it. Interest in the Barmakid family and their past affiliation in Balkh grew after they had achieved important positions within the 'Abbāsid

Caliphate in the eighth century. In addition, Nawbahār's religious and architectural similarity to the Kaʿba (the House of God in Mecca) on the one hand (both are cubical structures) and the notable chief monk of Nawbahār, known as Barmak, on the other, captivated these authors' attention.

Two important sources of the Islamic period referred to Nawbahār of Balkh in some detail: the tenth-century Ibn al-Faqīh and the thirteenth-century Yāqūt. Ibn al-Faqīh, who based his report on an earlier account of Abū Hafs al-Kirmānī, not only compared the physical appearance of the structure of Nawbahār, with its fine drapery and ornaments, to that of the Kaʿba in Islamic times but also commented on the similarity of the rituals of circumambulation (*tawāf*) around the structure and the act of prostration performed around both Nawbahār and the Kaʿba.[14] Also in the description of Masʿudī, Nawbahār had a vast estate around it, it had fine drapery, and Barmak was the chief priest from whom the famous ʿAbbāsid politician Khālid b. Barmak was descended.[15] To Muslim observers, the tradition of circumambulation and prostration to a square-shaped structure (*stūpa* for the Buddhists and *Kaʿba* for the Muslims) must have been strikingly similar.[16] In retrospect one can only conjecture about the real origin of the practice of circumambulation of *Kaʿba*. Muslims, of course, based their ritual of pilgrimage and circumambulation on a prophetic saying or *hadīth* transmission, not on the Koran.[17]

Another brief yet fascinating comparison between Mecca and Balkh was made by the thirteenth-century Juvaynī, a historian of the Mongol period: "In previous centuries Balkh in the eastern region maintained the same status as Mecca in the western region."[18] In the same vein, the Persian poet Daqīqī (d. 980) compared the status of Nawbahār of Balkh (although he perceived it to be a Zoroastrian fire temple[19]) and its religious importance with that of Mecca for the Arabs:[20]

> Balkh became the home of Nawbahar
> For the Zoroastrians of the time
> Since they had this place of worship
> The Arabs equally had Mecca at that time.

The analogy between the Kaʿba and Nawbahār was initially reported by Ibn al-Faqīh, who took his account from the original work of Abū Hafs al-Kirmānī. Al-Kirmānī's motivation for making such a connection seems to have been a strategy of supporting the Barmakid family and their past link with Nawbahār.[21] What becomes confusing in al-Kirmānī's account is his ambiguous connection of the Barmakids with Mecca as well as with Balkh. The allegation that the Barmakids imitated the Kaʿba, using it as a proto-model to build the Nawbahār of Balkh, was propagated by al-Kirmānī, an account that infiltrated future chronicles. There is, however, a discrepancy between the report of al-Kirmānī,[22] who lived around 800, and the report of Ibn al-Faqīh about a century later, as well as those of other authors who gave accounts of Nawbahār and the Barmakids of Balkh. Without focusing on the details of the discrepancies, it is fair to say that al-Kirmānī's personal contacts with the descendents of the Barmakids,[23] who had Buddhist backgrounds originating from Balkh, led him to bridge his personal bias by glorifying the Barmakids and ambiguously attaching them to Meccan custodianship. Because only incomplete

parts of al-Kirmānī's work were reported by later authors such as Ibn al-Faqīh,[24] Kevin van Bladel has used the Mashhad manuscript of Ibn al-Faqīh, extracted directly from the original work of al-Kirmānī (which has its differences with the version of Ibn al-Faqīh edited by de Goeje in 1885), in order to pinpoint exactly what was said. It is worth quoting a part of Ibn al-Faqīh's account (Mashhad MS.) based on al-Kirmānī's report on the topics of Nawbahār, the Barmakids, and Mecca:

> In Balkh is the Nawbahār, built by the Barmakids. The Barmakids were a noble people for a long time in Balkh before the petty kings [*mulūk al-tawā'īf*]. Their religion was idol worship. Then Mecca was described to them, and the circumstances of the Kaaba therein, and the religious practice of the Quraysh and the Arabs who supported them. Therefore they made the house of the Nawbahār in imitation of the sacred house of God, and erected idols around it, adorned it with silk brocade and silk cloth, and attached precious gems to it.... They used to call its chief custodian "Barmak," because they likened the house to Mecca, and they said its custodian is 'in charge of Mecca (*abar Makka* [or *bar makka*]). Whoever among them took the office of custodianship used to be called Barmak.[25]

This clever anachronistic link between Nawbahār, as though it were modeled after Mecca, and the application of the name *Barmak* for the custodianship of Mecca had to do with removing Buddhism as well as the Barmakids' association with the Buddhist monastery of Balkh from the Islamic scene. It was also meant to revise the Barmakids' history and eventual conversion to Islam to resemble those of the many companions of the Prophet who converted from idol-worshipping to Islam. The idea that the Barmakids yearned to build a so-called idol temple of Nawbahār in imitation of the pre-Islamic idol temple of the Ka'ba seems to be simply a fabrication by al-Kirmānī that was eventually inserted into the works of subsequent authors.

Architectural comparisons between the two religious structures are also intriguing. Building stūpas of different shapes, such as the famous square-shaped Nawbahār with a dome on the top decorated with Buddha statues, was part of the iconographical creativity of Khurāsān. Thus Nawbahār could have by no means been an imitation of the distant Ka'ba, although the opposite may be true. There are a number of circumstances that support the idea that a pre-Islamic Ka'ba may have been built in an imitation of a square-shaped Buddhist stūpa such as Nawbahār.

We know that the structure of Nawbahār was perfectly square, each side being of equal length, almost 48 meters (100 cubits), with a dome. This shape led various medieval writers to infer that it was identical to the Ka'ba, which can be assumed to have retained its cubical structure from the pre-Islamic period, although the dome may have been destroyed along with all the icons. In rebuilding the Ka'ba after its destruction in the civil war during the early Umayyad Caliphate in 683, an account reveals that the Ethiopian builders had asked the Meccan patrons if they wished the House of God to be rebuilt with a flat or pitched roof, and they chose a flat roof.[26] In other words, the flat roof of Mecca is a post-Islamic innovation. Perhaps it has not been without reason that later Islamic shrines and even mosques maintained the tradition of a dome found in the original architecture of the "House of God."

Various accounts also claim that the paintings on the walls of the Kaʿba portraying the prophets included Abraham with the portrait of his son, Ismāʿil, facing him on a horse, as well as the portrait of Jesus with his mother Mary; apparently they were well preserved until the Kaʿba was destroyed in a civil war.[27] Other celestial (or holy) characters were said to have been depicted in the Kaʿba's artwork.[28] It seems far-fetched that the pre-Islamic paintings of the Kaʿba, a shrine whose patrons before the Prophet of Islam were neither Christian nor Jewish, would have contained paintings of biblical characters. The nature of these paintings may have been the remainder of pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist art work, if any. The task of giving Islamic identities to these un-tagged or "unknown" paintings and portraits in the Kaʿba was presumably the work of the Muslim authors. It can be only speculated that the paintings were still preserved after the Kaʿba was Islamized because the pictorial prohibition in Islam seemed to be imposed based on *hadīth* transmission only much later.

Further indication to the potential presence of the Buddhists in Arabia is that the thirteenth-century Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, in his *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* asserts that in pre-Islamic times, the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina and certain Arabs and Persians were adherents of the Buddha Shakyamunī and that statues of the Buddha were kept in the Kaʿba.[29] This assertion by Rashīd al-Dīn may possibly corroborate with a miniature of the thirteenth century showing the Prophet at Kaʿba destroying two statues seemingly to be the seated Buddha in a meditational position and one statue of Hanuman (a Hindu deity with the head of a monkey).[30] Other characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arabs that Shahrastānī describes may further corroborate with the Indian beliefs. It is said that before the advent of Islam, the Arabs believed in reincarnation and had rejected the concepts of revelation and prophecy,[31] all of which also correspond with the Buddhist belief.

Moreover, Masʿudī in his discussion of the Buddha (Budāsef) refers to the Buddha's followers as communities of idol worshippers whose temples included the Kaʿba (*bayt al-harām*).[32] He also describes the Quraysh tribe of Mecca as having two gold-plated deer statues, one to be placed at the entrance of the Kaʿba and the other to be kept inside.[33] During the flood in Mecca that destroyed the Kaʿba, one of these golden deer went missing, and the Quraysh tribe therefore decided to remove the other deer.[34] The deer, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a typically Buddhist symbol. In a significant parallel, the statues of two golden deer on either side of the iconic Wheel of Dharma are placed at the entrance gates of Buddhist *vihāras* to this day.

How could Buddhism have reached Mecca? The sea journeys of Indians to Yemen, Arabia, and Egypt are somewhat documented. In pre-Islamic times, Mecca was a tolerant polytheistic society as well as a trade center, lying near the Red Sea via the Spice Route and attracting traders and missionaries of different backgrounds via land and sea. The Meccan sanctuary was not only a place for an annual pilgrimage in pre-Islamic times, where no bloodshed was permitted, but was also a place where merchants from different lands, including India, would hold a common market fair for the pilgrims.[35] According to another Islamic tradition, the Brahmans of India traveled to Mecca for worship and paying homage to the idols in pre-Islamic times.[36] Nāsir Khosrau of the eleventh century refers to seeing Indians of Yemen with their

particular type of hair dress, beard, and cloth (*lungī*) wrapped around their waist come to Mecca.[37] We can only presume that these Indians who continued coming to Mecca for trade, interestingly, without prohibition may have been a mixture of Hindus and Buddhists, but in medieval times both communities were casually known as Hindus (referring to Indians). Other historical references do point to the link between India and Arabia. The Indian settlements in Arabia, Yemen, Babylonia, and Egypt during the peak of commercial trade are recognized in historical writings.[38] Indians are even believed to have settled in Mecca and Medina, explaining the presence of several Sanskrit words and names of Indian spices in the Arabic language (e.g., *'ambar*, *mushk*, *zenjabil,* and *kāfur*).[39]

Given these indications and assertions by certain chroniclers, we can only guess that the Ka'ba may have possibly been another Buddhist *vihāra* before Islam. Consider the acts required of Muslim pilgrims on *hajj* even today that include, in contrast to the Buddhist, anticlockwise circumambulation (*tawāf*) of the Ka'ba and prostration. In addition, *hajj* pilgrims are required to shave their head and wear monastic robes (sleeveless and unsewn clothes) and must forbear wearing closed-toe shoes, cutting branches of trees, killing prey, and having sexual intercourse. These injunctions strongly match the rituals of the Buddhist monastic tradition.[40] Yet in the Muslim tradition, these norms are described as temporary states of purity that are performed in the Ka'ba by the pilgrims and are considered as a substitute for the purity of the Garden of Eden, and circumambulating is explained as being associated with Adam's sin.[41] Despite these explanations on behalf of Islamic tradition, their similarity to Buddhist rituals is rather remarkable. However, it seems no historical memory remains of Buddhist connections with relation to Mecca.

The Buddhist Barmakid Family

The comparison between Nawbahār and Ka'ba was not limited just to architecture or ritual usage. In their writings, al-Kirmānī and Ibn al-Faqīh erroneously claim that the chief priest in charge of Mecca and the chief priest of Nawbahār were both called *bar-mak* (*bar* referring to administer, while *makk* stood for Makka or *Mecca*).[42] The phonetic similarity was the basis for the manipulated interpretation of *Barmak*, who actually had nothing to do with being the custodian of Mecca. *Barmak* in fact was the name for the head priest of a Buddhist monastery, derived from the Sanskrit term *pramukha* meaning "chief" (Tibetan *par-mog*) and the term *parmak* from Bactrian. As *parmak* passed into Arabic, the foreign phoneme "p" changed to "b" and *parmak* became *barmak*.[43]

The chief priest of Nawbahār, the first Barmak in the ancestral lineage of the Barmakid family, converted to Islam at the time of the third Caliph, Uthman (644–656). (Even though evidence is uncertain and obscure, it is asserted that the original Barmakids could trace their ancestry to the Hephthalites of Balkh.[44]) According to the chronicles, after returning to Balkh from his alleged visit to Mecca and Medina, Barmak and his family, except his wife and one son, were killed by the local aristocracy, allegedly for having abandoned their heritage and converted to Islam. The great Barmak's only son, also known by the name of Barmak, who had escaped death, studied sciences and medicine in Kashmir and then came back to

settle in Balkh and resume his father's task of Buddhist priesthood at Nawbahār.[45] Barmak seems to have remained a Buddhist. He had a son in 709, Khālid, who was the son of the last Barmak. He was born as a Buddhist who later converted to Islam and took various ministerial jobs within the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.[46]

This also suggests the functioning of Nawbahār along with the practice of Buddhism in Balkh until at least the early eighth century, the time when the newly adjusted asceticism was on the rise in Balkh in the face of the advent of Islam. The Buddhist ancestry of the Barmakids seems to have stimulated interest in Indian sciences during the age of translation in Baghdad in the late eighth century. Yahyā became even more successful than his father, Khālid, and sponsored Sanskrit translation in the 'Abbāsid court at Baghdad, motivated in part by a personal interest in Indian and Buddhist works.[47] To this effect, Mas'udī, like other Muslim chroniclers, reports about how Khālid b. Barmak rose to high office at the court of the mighty Caliph Harun al-Rashīd (786–808 CE).[48] Mas'udī also provides a detailed account of the Barmakid family's fall from grace and their eventual demise in 803. Their fall occurred not only because they had attracted many non-Islamic elements to the Baghdad intellectual circle but also because of the scandalous marriage of Ja'far Barmakī ,Yahyā's son, with Hārun al-Rashīd's sister, 'Abbāsa, who brought an unwanted child into the world.[49] Whatever the reasons, the Barmakids with their great interest in Indian sciences and philosophy and their Buddhist background were brought down for their brief intervention in the intellectual culture of the Islamic world.

Nawbahār was compared to the Ka'ba by the Islamic chroniclers associated with the Barmakid family simply in order to tie together many historical facets while leaving out Buddhism in their discussions of history and culture. The historical trajectory that the authors presented was intended to demonstrate that the idol-worshipping of Mecca in the west and of Balkh in the east were of an identical nature, which was defeated on both sides by the triumphant Islam. At the same time they have given us some clues that Nawbahār and the Ka'ba were not only physically similar but also had the same function as sanctuaries.

The Survival of Nawbahār after Islam

Buddhism in Balkh remained the dominant religion on both sides of the Amō Daryā (Oxus River) until the Muslim conquest.[50] The famous Buddhist monastery of Nawbahār in Balkh was certainly not immediately destroyed at the advent of Islam in Balkh, since the reports indicate that Barmak, fleeing from Kashmir, was able to return to Balkh and resume his Buddhist work at Nawbahār. We also know that it was during the Saffārid era, around 870, that Bāmīyān was stripped of its Buddha statues, which were sent to Baghdad, another indication of the continuation of Buddhism during the Islamic period. Even in Bukhārā, 200 years after the Muslim conquest, around the mid-tenth century (during the Sāmānid period), the Buddha statues were auctioned three times a year.[51] These references point to the continuation of Buddhism and Nawbahār during the early Islamic period, longer than generally assumed.

Even after the final demise of Buddhism in Khurāsān, the name and site of Nawbahār in Balkh and elsewhere remained sacred. It has been said that the ruins of Nawbahār remained until the late fifteenth century and were locally known as Bahār.[52] The name *Nawbahār*, however, according to Ibn Hawqal (d. late 900), continued to be used for places and was associated with areas that had Buddhist temples or heritage. Nawbahār was used as the name of important gates in Balkh and Samarqand.[53] In the Islamic period the name *Nawbahār* not only continued to stand for the names of villages and places in Afghanistan and Iran potentially associated with Buddhist heritage, but it also became a metaphor in Persian literature.

The poetical usage of Nawbahār continued to appear in Persian poetry when the actual Buddhist temple in Balkh was long gone. Nawbahār was a literary metaphor referring to a temple where there were beautified Buddha statues (*bot*) made up with red lips, moon-faced, and adorned with jewels. Mas'ud Sa'd, the Persian poet of the eleventh century (similar to other poets such as Farrokhī, Anvarī, and Firdousī), provides this verse about Nawbahār:

> Nawbahār displayed its finest idols, and none
> Matched your beauty at Nawbahār.

To summarize, the Buddhist monastery of Nawbahār in Balkh was destroyed in the centuries following the Islamic period, but its site was replaced by another iconic symbol that kept Balkh's name and reputation sacred irrespective of the religion of the land. Mazār-i Sharīf as the alleged tomb of 'Ali in Balkh once more became another pilgrimage site by unconsciously reasserting the past glory of Nawbahār. The ruins of Buddhism were buried through the centuries that followed its demise, but the legendary name of Nawbahār as a standard name for Buddhist monastery has maintained its telling geographical heritage in both Afghanistan and Iran.

Nawbahār and Its Later History in Iran

Today there is no trace of any Buddhist monastery known as Nawbahār in Iran, even though the name *Nawbahār* has persisted in its historical geography. During the Parthian and even Sasanid eras the Buddhist settlers had built a number of stūpas and monasteries, and some of these may have survived through the early Islamic period. More Buddhist temples were built by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, but they were all either destroyed or converted to mosques or Sufi shrines after the conversion of the last Mongols to Islam. The same could have happened to Nawbahārs left from the pre-Islamic Iran: in the Islamic period they were either abandoned or transformed into mosques and shrines in the same way that many Zoroastrian fire temples transformed or vanished in Islamic Iran. It can be assumed that the previous Buddhist communities erected some type of Nawbahār and that the names survived to become district and village names in different parts of Iran as they did in Afghanistan. As our survey will show, some districts and villages have traditionally kept the name *Nawbahār* or have used a similar term that also stands for a Buddhist temple.

Generations of Muslims native to villages or districts in Islamic Iran called Nawbahār have never suspected that there may have been a Buddhist connection to this name, since Buddhist memories had been obliterated. Since Nawbahār in modern Persian is composed of two words that literally mean "new spring," the etymology may have prevented people from detecting the other historical meaning or significance of Nawbahār. It must be borne in mind, however, that the word *bahār* is derived from Sanskrit word *vihār*, and is unrelated to the Persian word for *spring*. Nevertheless, the name *Nawbahār* for "new spring" should not be counted out.

The name *Nawbahār* historically occurred in places such as Bukhārā, Samarqand, Rayy, and near Sabzevār and Baihaq, as Bulliet traces them in his initial study of 1976.[54] According to the thirteenth-century historian, Juvaynī, in Uighur and Khotanese the name *Bukhārā* itself is derived from *bukhār* (or Sanskrit *vihār*); thus *Bukhārā* or *vihāra* means the Buddhist center of learning.[55] Nawbahār also occurs as the name of a number of villages and places between Balkh and Herat all the way to Kurdistan in western Iran. Similarly, several more Nawbahārs are on the trade route between Herat and Sabzevār, something to be expected to be built for the Buddhist traders and missionaries for prayer purposes. Among these Nawbahārs one is located in the small district just east of the ruins of medieval Neishābur, and another Nawbahār is near Qadamgāh, east of Neishābur.[56]

According to the latest survey of Nawbahār, based on a 2009 survey of religious and ancient townships, there are at least 23 villages in Iran called Nawbahār—supplementing the 10 previously identified villages that Dehkhodā reported in his lexicon of *Loghat Nāmeh*.[57] These villages are spread through districts in Nā'in; Gonābād; Sanandaj, Sagiz, and Beejār in Kurdistan;[58] Seerjān; Hamadān;[59] Tafrish;[60] Rafsanjān; Torbat Haydariyeh, with four Nawbahārs; Isfahān; Sabzevār, with two Nawbahārs; Mashhad, with two Nawbahārs; and Neishābur, with four Nawbahārs.[61] It is important to note that a large numbers of Nawbahārs are located in Khurāsān province of Iran. There are innumerable places named *Nawbahār* in Afghanistan that cannot be considered here because they are not within the scope of our study.

There has been no physical evidence, nor has there been any archaeological excavation so far, to prove inconclusively that these Nawbahārs have a Buddhist connection. In the Islamization process, nothing Buddhist would be expected to survive on the surface. In 2006, however, a joint Iranian-Japanese excavation team apparently found ruins that it determined to be a Buddhist structure, 12 kilometers west of Sabzevār, in the village of Pīrāstir. The team of archaeologists has described the Buddhist structure, but its complete report is yet to be published.[62]

In Pīrāstir village, apparently, for at least several centuries, people would come on pilgrimage and pay homage to the tomb of the Sufi master (*Mazār-i Pīr*). The popular belief is that the pedigree of the deceased master goes back to one of the companions of ʻAli, the first Shiʻi Imam.[63] In the absence of documentation we need to content ourselves with this archaeological discovery that Sabzevār (well situated on the trade route connecting Central Asia, Khurāsān, and western Iran) and its vicinity had a Buddhist community. Presumably during the Islamization process, certain shrines perhaps similar to the one in Pīrāstir may have been Buddhist stūpas that through time had come under a Sufi cover. Undoubtedly, Sabzevār, with two

Nawbahār villages around it and lying on the trade route from Buddhist Turkistan that passed through Neishābur heading to Rayy, could have attracted communities of Buddhist settlers and missionaries in the pre-Islamic and even the early Islamic period.

A shorter version of the name *Nawbahār* is *Bahār.* Present-day Iran has a total of five villages named *Bahār* in the vicinities of Bojnūrd, Beerjand,[64] Qūchān,[65] Mashhad, and Hamadān. Fifteen other villages bear variations of the name *Bahār,* such as Bahārān, Bahārābād, Bahār khāneh, and Bahāru. Additionally, ten other villages are called Bahāristān, one of which is located near Neishābur. Finally, ten villages that have Bahār combined with another name or suffix can be located in different parts of the country,[66] some of which are within districts that already have Nawbahār near them, including Isfahān, Mashhad, and Torbat Haydariyeh. Additionally a gate in Tūs (near Mashhad) is also called *Bahār* in the same way as in Bukhārā and Samarqand.[67]

Two other important names stemming from the Central Asian region and languages that stand for a Buddhist monastery also occur in Iran: *Farkhār* and *Nawshād*. The name *Farkhār* is a Soghdian word, which like Nawbahār means Buddhist temple.[68] In *Hūdūd al-Ālam* the "Great Farkhār" was a place in Tibet where there was a large "idol" temple.[69] Biruni in his *Āthār al-Bāqiya* refers to Farkhār and Bahāra as the Buddhist temples between Khurāsān and India.[70]

We also learn from the Persian poets that Farkhār, located in Taleqān, and Badakhshān (both in Afghanistan) were Buddhist temples.[71] The great classical Persian poets such as Rūdakī, Saʿdī, Nizāmī, Manūchehrī, and Farrokhī use the word *Farkhār* in their poetry as a metaphor for a place whose idols (Buddha statues) have always maintained great fame.[72] Saʿdī and Manūchehrī, respectively, wrote these verses about Farkhār as a Buddhist temple:

> The monks (*moqān*) who serve the idol in Farkhār
> Have laid eyes only on the beauty of their idols.
>
> The rose garden pretends to be the great idol temple of Farkhār,
> The birds act like the Buddhist monks (*shaman*) venerating the rose buds.

Rūdakī, the tenth-century Persian poet, also composed this verse about the "Great Farkhār" of Tibet:

> The Great Farkhār is a delightful place,
> Where it is the source of the inspiring idol.

In Iran there are two villages that bear the name *Farkhār*; one is again near Neishābur, and the other, called Farkhārān, is near Tabriz[73] (the stronghold of former Il-Khānid Mongols).

Regarding the name *Nawshād,* it is believed to have been applied to or synonymous with the Buddhist temple of Nawbahār in Balkh. Sometimes historians and poets (Farrokhī, Masʿud Saʿd, and Nāsir Khosrau) use Nawbahār and Nawshād of Balkh interchangeably as if they both stood for one and the same temple.[74] Nawshād

may have been an area in Turkistan near Balkh where there were various Buddhist temples.[75] In Iran there is only one village by the name Nawshād near Beejār (where there is also a Nawbahār nearby). There is also another village called Nawshādī in the southern Iranian Rām Hūrmoz district.[76] Referring to the Nawshād temple as a pilgrimage site, Farrokhī writes metaphorically:

> Your house has become the *qibla* for prayers,
> As the house of Nawshād once was.

There is another equivalent for Nawbahār that also stands for a Buddhist temple, and that is Qandahār[77] (not to be confused with the city in Afghanistan). There is a village of Qandahār near Marāgheh (the first capital of the Buddhist Il-Khānids in Āzarbāijān), and another one near Bandar ʻAbbās.[78]

There are several other names of villages in different parts of Iran that raise curiosity about whether these names have been associated with the Buddhist heritage in one way or another. For example, the word *bot*, a short form for the name of the Buddha (or idol), appears in different forms in the names of villages and districts in Iran. The names that contain "bot" are Botkadeh and Botān, two villages near Neishābur; [79] Botān bālā, and Botān pāyeen are names that occur for the names of two villages in Sāveh district, as well as in Rām Hūrmoz district. Other names that contain the word *bot* are Botī in Bandar ʻAbbās, Botī in Chāh Bahār, Botak ābād in Isfahān, Botū in Neishābur, and Botkhāneh in the district of Bushir, near Sīrāf.[80] These names do refer to "idol temples" or an association with idols of some sort. Since neither the pre-Islamic Zoroastrians nor the Manichaeans ever had idol temples, the "idol temples" in question were likely Buddhist (or possibly Hindu) temples.

There are other names of villages in Iran that bear the name of the Buddha or at least seem to have Buddhist connotations, such as Buddhān in Najaf Ābād; Buddlā in Beejār; Buddhīyān in *Sume'a Sarā* district; meaning "the monastery hall"; and Buddhīneh in Burujird.[81]

Another name that looms large in the search for a forgotten Buddhist heritage in Iran is the name *Barmak*. As mentioned earlier, *Barmak* was a name given in Balkh to the chief monk of a Buddhist monastery. In Iran there are four villages that bear the name *Barmak*. These villages are Barmak in Dashtistān, and Barmak bālā, Barmak vasat, and Barmak pāyeen, all three in Mamasanī district.[82] In this region, similar to several other regions of Iran and Afghanistan, interestingly, there are many people even today who bear the last names of Barmakī or Barmakīān.

A neglected connection between the district of Mamasanī and a potential Buddhist temple is at Nurābād in Mamasanī, where there is an old-style shrine called Imāmzāda Āhanīn. This shrine is octagonal, and on each side there is an alcove (*shāh-neshīn*)[83] that has been described as a seat for a statue. This obscure shrine with its *shāh-neshīn* could earlier have been a temple that accommodated statues. Thus the combination of three villages by the name *Barmak* and a sanctuary that might have been a Buddhist temple that was transformed into an Islamic shrine make it probable that Mamasanī district had a Buddhist past. As for why three villages included Barmak in their names, there are two possibilities. These

names may have been chosen in honor of the famous Barmakid family, previously Buddhist, who served under the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate. Or, in the Buddhist heyday of tolerant Iran, the Buddhist chief monk of the area (the Barmak) may have lived in those villages that still bear the name Barmak.

Other Buddhist Designations

It is time to turn our focus to the south of Iran and to the Persian Gulf region, where several city names suggest a Buddhist past.

The name of the city of Chāh Bahār in the southeast of Iran carries a Buddhist connotation. The name *Shāh Bahār* is associated with the Buddhist monastery built for the Kushān kings in Bagrām, as well as a Shāh Bahār (monastery or Botkhāna) near Ghazni.[84] These occurrences of the name *Shāh Bahār* elsewhere lead us to infer the presence of Buddhism in Baluchistan and Sindh in ancient times where the present-day Chāh Bahār is located. As evidence of the presence of Buddhist communities in parts of Baluchistan and Sindh, in the middle of the third century the prophet Mānī traveled to the area of Baluchistan and Sindh, whose king, Tūrān Shāh, was Buddhist.[85] Furthermore, the presence of Indians at Tis near Chāh Bahār is recorded.[86] Today in Chāh Bahār there is a mausoleum attributed to a local saint named Nā-mohammad. Having viewed several photographs of this shrine, there is no doubt that the shrine's architecture is completely Indian.[87] This shrine could very well be a modified pre-Islamic temple or a component of the Shāh Bahār in question. And thus the presence of the Buddhists in Baluchistan and Sindh could have been the reason for the presence of a Shāh Bahār, and over time the local dialect changed the "sh" sound to "ch," so that *Shāh Bahār* came to be pronounced *Chāh Bahār*.

In seeking the Buddhist heritage in the Baluchistan and Sistān regions, the name of the city of Zāhedān, north of Chāh Bahār, should be scrutinized for potentially having been a major seat for the ascetics. Because of their proximity to the Persian Gulf and the Indian world, Chāh Bahār and Zāhedān in earlier times would have welcomed the Indian and Buddhist settlers who arrived by sea. The word *"zāhed"* in both Arabic and Persian means *ascetic*. Zāhedān is the plural of *zāhed*, meaning "ascetics" or "renunciates," or a place where the ascetics lived. The resemblance of such names of cities and their geographical vicinity to the ancient Buddhist world makes us wonder if Chāh Bahār and Zāhedān in truth drew their names from the Indian and Buddhist heritage now lost to memory.

Conclusion

The Buddhist monastery of Nawbahār in Balkh preoccupied the chroniclers with its magnificent structure, scholastic standing, and the importance of its custodians who took the title of Barmak. The spread of the name *Nawbahār* across the border to Iran, where it also gained significant cultural attention, occurred not merely because it was an attractive name but most importantly because it stood for a Buddhist center for communal gatherings. How prevalent Buddhism may have been in Iran in different time periods cannot be physically documented, but historical and

geographical hints about place-names like Nawbahār may lead to groundbreaking discoveries, primarily through archaeological undertakings and further anthropological studies in the areas under scrutiny. While a Buddhist heritage is not openly visible in modern Iran from the historical and geographical references, we can find the heritage well hidden in the background.

Part II. The Similarity of the Shiʿi Shrine to the Buddhist Stūpa in Iran

As discussed earlier, Ibn al-Faqīh described the monastery of Nawbahār in Balkh as being a square structure with a dome on the top where flags and banners were fixed. He further explained that non-Arab (*ʿAjam*) pilgrims provided gifts, glorified it, and made pilgrimage to it.[88] This description fits Sufi and Shiʿi shrines and mausoleum architecture, particularly in Iran. Of course, well before the spread of Shiʿism in Iran, the stūpa-like shrines and mausolea had already spread throughout Central Asia and Khurāsān.[89] The spread of such religious architecture into inner Iran later became the model for Sufi and Shiʿi shrines. In these Islamic shrines the remains of a buried Sufi, an Imam, or descendant of an Imam (Imāmzāda) is kept in a square chamber walled with fine window grills. On the top of these shrines there is a hollow dome, onto which prayer flags and banners are fixed, while pilgrims venerate the shrine and make the ritual of circumambulation (*tawāf*—or *zīyārat* in Persian also means pilgrimage) as well as offer donations. The purpose of circumambulation in the Buddhist as well as Shiʿi context is for purification of thoughts and deeds. It becomes increasingly evident that the idea of stūpas in Iran did not vanish, but rather was transformed and adapted to fit new historical and religious circumstances.

From the architectural and religious point of view, the Nawbahār or stūpa seems to have made a subtle transition to an Islamic shrine, since the Shiʿi iconography and religious models had no other precedents to base themselves on other than the influence of the Buddhist model of the stūpa, although the Zoroastrian temples should not be counted out. The combination of similar ceremonial rituals and architecture, and the geographical proximity to the Buddhist world make the cross-influences extremely plausible given all the parallel rituals. Let us first provide a brief historical background for the evolution of the stūpa in the Buddhist world and its cross-over into Islamic Iran.

The Idea of the Stūpa

The stūpa started as a hill-shaped, domed structure built on a square or cylindrical base, the earliest Buddhist structures to house the relics of the Buddha. The tradition was initiated by King Aśoka (ca. 273–237 B.C.E.).[90] It is said that the first stūpa was built over the Buddha's crematory ashes, but that the later structures were designed to have a sealed chamber to enshrine and store relics of the Buddha or those of his disciples. Devotees would walk around the stūpa as a symbol of veneration.[91] The Buddhists did not bury their high monks or their dead, and thus they had no religious mausoleums or shrines per se. However in Sarvāstivādin

Buddhism, which was prevalent in eastern Iran and Khurāsān, it was believed that because the world would not permit the body of the Buddha to be recreated, the bodies of his attendants are allowed to be prayed to, symbolized in erecting and adoring a stūpa.[92]

In ancient times, burial sites were elevated from the ground. This tradition may have affected the development of stūpas in India, where they were originally used for royal tombs. The concept passed on to the Buddhists of a holy locality associated with a relic or event involving the Buddha, where adherents perform the ritual of circumambulation.[93] The Buddhist stūpa evolved more in changing its architecture rather than its religious ceremony, at least in the Indian context.[94] The later Buddhist purpose for circumambulation was to venerate the supreme lawgiver and spiritual teacher, the Buddha.

The stūpa's forms and architecture changed from the large Indian stūpa to various forms and sizes later in the Buddhist regions in Khurāsān and eastern Iran.[95] In Buddhist cliff architecture, there are numerous rock-hewn stūpas where circumambulation and other rituals could take place. The earliest Buddhist stūpas go back to the third century B.C.E. (in Sānchi, India), and those built in Khurāsān and Iranian areas may have lasted until the seventh century C.E. or even later. In earlier times, under the Kushān dynasty, the Buddha's tooth, hair, and skull were preserved as holy relics at the sites of stūpas in Hadda (near modern day Jalālābād), Balkh, and Bagrām, which became pilgrimage sites. The rituals of circumambulation around and prostration toward the stūpas are still practiced by Tibetan, Nepali, Ladakhi, Bhutanese, and Sikkim Buddhists.

The idea of the stūpa and its architecture was meant to represent a cosmic construction, with a spherical dome to represent its celestial origin.[96] This mystical and spiritual representation became a Buddhist icon with the development of the Gandhāran School of art, and the stūpa evolved into an even more elaborate edifice. In Afghanistan, between the fifth and sixth centuries, the shape changed from the circular-based stūpa of Tup-darra near Kabul, into the cubical-based stūpa as seen in Gul-darra, also known as Mosa-ee, in Logar, and in Taxila, northwest of modern Islamabad.[97] Although partly ruined, the stūpa in Gul-darra in Afghanistan had a square base measuring 12.9 meters, with an elevated platform of 4.3 meters and a smaller second platform, as the photographs and the study of A. Lézine show. The hollow dome's diameter on the top is 8.81 meters.[98] This square-shaped, domed stūpa was an important place of worship where pilgrims would perform their rituals. Similar cubical stūpas followed, such as the one in Shotorak near Panjshir, as well as the stūpa monument of Charkh-i Falak in Balkh with a square podium, dating toward the end of the Buddhist era.[99]

The square-shaped or cubical stūpa design was duplicated in the cities along the Silk Route to Central Asia and Chinese Turkistan. The Tibetan cubical stūpa was a replica of the Afghan-Iranian stūpa model.[100] In this regard, it is highly possible that the Tibetan *Gumpa* (stūpa or prayer hall, perhaps derived from the Tibetan word *gum,* meaning to familiarize oneself with, to meditate) may be a derivative word from the Persian word *Gunbad (*pronounced as *gumbad*), or, as some call it, *Gumbaz,*[101] meaning dome or mausoleum. It is also possible that this became a loan word in Arabic and Persian from the Tibetan. Regarding the influences on the

cubical stūpa, Melikian-Chirvani proposes the idea that the cubical stūpas that appeared in Khurāsān (as well as in the Afghan-Pakistan area) and continued to appear all the way to the end of the Buddhist era between the sixth and seventh centuries show the influence from the Sasanid architecture of the Chahār-tāq fire temple, perhaps with Hellenic decorative motifs.[102] A domed ceiling over a square base also occurred in Sasanid and Byzantine palaces between the third and fifth centuries.[103] The shape of the stūpa in India was usually more spherical or semi-spherical. Perhaps it was due to local architectural influences, in this case Sasanid-Zoroastrian, that the temples and stūpas in Khurāsān and Central Asia became more square shaped than spherical. In this case the square-shaped stūpa would also become a base for a semi-spherical dome on the top.

As for the spiritual symbolism of the stūpa, it represented the mortal Buddha after his *parinīrvāna* (complete passing away) or sometimes even held the remains of a distinguished monk.[104] The funerary monuments to the Buddha or other Buddhist saints in the form of a stūpa were supposed to be built at the meeting of four roads where the pilgrims gathered in order to place garlands, put perfume and paint on the shrine, and make their salutations with calm and pure hearts.[105] The drapery of the stūpa and glass work as well as color-rich decorations were all done in Gandhāran and Khurāsānian art styles, which differed from those used in the Indian stūpas.[106] The stūpa became an edifice on which to raise prayer flags and install religious icons, and to be garlanded with flowers and decoration bands and strings. All of these features, interestingly, were adopted for use in mausoleums in Khurāsān in the Islamic period.[107]

The Buddhist Stūpa, the Shiʿi Shrine, and Similar Iconography

It must also be reiterated that the combination of ceremonial rituals in veneration of the enshrined relic or the holy man seem to have no parallel with the pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism of Iran, only with Buddhism and Christianity. Let us explore how the Buddhist ritual came to find a proper place in the Iranian religious culture.

The stūpa design of a square structure with a semi-spherical hollow dome on top passed on to Islamic architecture, which both the Shiʿi and the Sufi communities exploited. Buried Sufis, Imams, and their descendants (Imāmzāda) were enshrined in such structures, around which pilgrims would perform the ritual of circumambulation similar to that of the Buddhists. The transition from the Buddhist stūpa to the Shiʿi mausoleum occurred swiftly in the Iranian world.[108] Rashīd al-Dīn in his thirteenth-century *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* depicts the "mausoleum" of the Buddha as being a dome with a square base with window grills and bars,[109] a design that can be noticed at the pilgrimage site of an Imāmzāda with a square-based chamber, decorated window, and grills (*zarīh*)[110] borrowed from the pre-Islamic Buddhist period.

The infiltration of Buddhist architectural and religious iconography into the Islamic period beginning in eastern Iran was slow and conceivably an unconscious continuation of Buddhism. In the first century of Islam, the erection of any memorial shrine was prohibited, and the burial sites of the pious Muslims were recommended to be marked by modest and simple symbols.[111] In the later stages of the

Islamic period in eastern Iran, the ban on shrines was ignored as mausolea of rulers and pious people were erected, starting in a Buddhist-populated region. The first such mausoleum in Khurāsān was that of Ismāʿil of the Sāmānid dynasty, from the late ninth and early tenth centuries in Bukhārā.[112] It seems that between the ninth and tenth centuries, Bukhārā under the Sāmānid dynasty, in spite of everything that had transpired with the advent of Islam in the region, still had a Buddhist community.[113] These first mausoleums used the pre-Islamic Buddhist design of a square-shaped stūpa topped with a hollow dome and revealed the influence that Buddhism would have on the development of shrine architecture. Ismāʿil's mausoleum in fact became the oldest tomb shrine in the Islamic period which was later on imitated for building mausolea of prominent Sufis by the Mongol Il-Khans in the fourteenth century and Shiʿi holy figures particularly after mass conversion to Shiʿism in sixteenth-century Iran.[114]

The mausoleum of Seljūq Sultan Sanjar (d. ca. 1157) in Merv is another example of the Buddhist stūpa's architectural influence. The twelfth-century Ghūrids, who emerged after the Ghaznavid in Afghanistan and the Indus Valley, continued building shrines that incorporated the Buddhist architectural style of the stūpa as well as Hindu decorative motifs.[115]

Earlier we mentioned the pilgrims' ritual of circumambulation around the shrine, a ritual that the Sunni and Arab Muslims could only relate to in terms of circumambulation around the Kaʿba.[116] Some have even suggested that the square-shaped shrine and circumambulatory ritual around it was a replacement for the pilgrimage to Mecca for the Shiʿi Muslims of Iran, whose relations with the Sunnis of Mecca was not so easy in the ensuing centuries of conflict. This assumption is rejected by Algar, who believes that the Shiʿites tried very hard in premodern times to perform the pilgrimage despite the difficulties of the journey and frictions with the Sunnis of Mecca.[117]

Shiʿi shrines usually held the buried body of the holy person in the center, surrounded by a square structure around which the pilgrims would not only circumambulate, but also perform acts of devotion, praying for their wishes to come true and their problems to be solved. Outside the shrine building, there would be a dome on which a flag (*alam*) or several prayer banners would fly. The Shiʿi pilgrims usually would use a rosary for prayers and would burn candles either inside or outside the shrine, all practices that are still performed today by Buddhists who visit a Buddhist *vihār* or stūpa. There are hundreds if not thousands of simple minor Buddhist shrines on the roads where adherents burn candles and pray. The same parallel can be seen in Shiʿi Iran in the form of a carved hollow shrine in a wall or a stand on the road called *saqā-khāneh,* where people burn candles and pray. These small roadside shrines also have Christian parallels.

Another parallel development was the portable shrine. In Buddhist iconography, an image of the Buddha or a bodhisattva would be carved or painted in a *mandala*-like portrait for being carried to places on a journey or even for private devotional purposes.[118]In Shiʿi Iran the image of Mohammad and ʿAli were produced for private devotion not only in similar "*mandala*-like" fashion called *shamā'il* but also in a form of ornamental jewelry for devotional purposes and portability. The Shiʿi tradition of keeping *shamā'il* (or *timssāl*) or the portraits of the Prophet and Imam ʿAli at

home is both a sign of devotion and also a means of divine protection of the household.[119] The portrait of ʿAli usually has a halo of light behind him representing the light (*imām-i nourānī*) while giving him all the divine attributes.[120] Devout Shiʿi in Iran today often venerate a small portrait of ʿAli by repeatedly kissing it and touching it to their forehead several times for devotional purposes. The benedictional virtues attributed to ʿAli often emphasized by the dervishes[121] can find a parallel with the same protecting power attributed to the Buddha by the zealot Buddhists. The custom of devotional ritual before the image of ʿAli or Mohammad in Iranian Shiʿism, showing the face and physical aspects of these holy figures, is conceivably an Indianized version of iconography, particularly considering the Islamic injunction against representations of holy figures.

The Iranians continued to produce images of their religious figures and to depict the stories and events surrounding their lives, especially with ʿAli and Hussein and even the Mahdi. Book illustration and illumination, a remnant of the Il-Khan period, included many Islamic/Shiʿi themes such as the portraits of Mohammad designating ʿAli as the rightful leader.[122] The Shiʿites, similar to the Buddhists and Manichaeans, understood the power of art in propagating their message. In fact the pictorial representation of Mohammad became more popular in Iran and India in the centuries that followed the advent of Islam.[123] Even though the production of images based on *hadīth* was to be avoided and eradicated by the Muslims,[124] the Iranians had at the same time hung the garlanded portraits of their holy men in mosques, shrines, and homes. This probably reflected the continuation of Buddhist iconographic influence, especially after the introduction of the thirteenth-century Buddhist miniature in Iran during the Il-Khānids, since such iconography has been at the least, not the practice, and at the most, abhorrent, to Sunni Arabs throughout the centuries. In regard to the psychology of iconography, about 1,000 years ago, Biruni's assessment was that common people need iconic figures and images to venerate. Birunī compared the culture of the masses in Islam who would do no differently than the Brahmans: if they themselves had a representation of Mohammad or the Kaʿba, they would kiss the representations and rub their cheeks against them and roll themselves in dust as if they had seen the original.[125] The pictorial representation is more tangible for the masses because, as Birunī explained, "the popular mind leans towards the sensible world, and has an aversion to the world of abstract thought . . . as common people will only acquiesce in pictorial representations."[126]

The other striking similarity between Buddhist and Islamic iconography is that the body parts of Mohammad such as hair, finger nails, teeth, and his belongings such as sandals, walking stick, and bowl became relics of veneration in Islamic *madrasas* or shrines in far-flung territories in the same way that the body parts and objects supposedly belonging to the Buddha had become icons for worship in stūpas throughout Buddhist territories.[127]

On the artistic plane, Buddhist sanctuaries and stūpas have usually maintained a creative tradition of colorful paintings on the walls, or plating objects with gold or silver. Shrines and mausolea after the tenth century maintained similar artistic styles of adorning such shrines with paintings of birds, floral motifs, wood-carving, mirror work, inscriptions, and objects, with domes and doors silver- or gold plated.[128]

These decorative measures and devotional practices as described above, needless to say, drew criticism from the Salafī Sunni Muslims who have called the Shiʿi community *Quburiyyun,* or "grave worshippers."[129]

In Iran, hundreds of Shiʿi mausolea or Imāmzādas have appeared to retain the same structure as a stūpa with similar decorative motifs, including those on the cliffs of remote mountains and cave-hewn shrines. Many of these rock or cave-hewn shrines on top of hills were probably transformed from pre-Islamic shrines into mosques or Shiʿi mausolea.

In the literary world, the dome of the Buddhist stūpa is associated with and symbolizes the concept of the cosmos. As Melikian-Chirvani points out, there are a number of literary metaphors in Persian poetry referring to the dome: *gonbad gardān* (spiral dome), *gonbad tisgerd* (swift -spinning dome), *gonbad lājevard* (lapis-like dome), and *gonbad nīloofarī* (lotus-shaped dome).[130] This is another parallel between the Persian subliminal association of a physical dome with that of the turning cosmos, which presumably received its inspiration from the original Buddhist connotation.

In a further remnant of Buddhist iconography, there has been a literary use of the lotus motif (*nīloofar*). The lotus in Buddhism symbolizes the spiritual naturalness of the human being going through birth and death (*samsāra*), the muddy water allegorically without being contaminated or smeared by it. Art from Gandhāra and Mathura around the third and fourth centuries shows the Buddha sitting on a lotus as the ruler of the Universe.[131] The association of the lotus or *nīloofar* with the Buddha as well as with the dome of the stūpa is another clue that Buddhist art and metaphor continued to appear in Iranian artistic and literary culture.

On a religious plane, to meet the spiritual needs of the Shiʿi community in Iran, Islamic monotheism apparently needed to be supplemented by pilgrimage to mausolea and shrines. The promotion of pilgrimage to Imāmzādas for the Shiʿi folks in Iran picked up momentum from the religious directive of the seventeenth-century Shiʿi theologian Majlisī.[132] The mystical and spiritual intentions of pilgrims paying homage, whether to a Buddhist stūpa or a Shiʿi Imāmzāda, may stem from the same subconscious source, only the icon being venerated and the cultural surroundings have changed. Even today, the similarities between the acts of a Buddhist pilgrim and a Shiʿi pilgrim are evident by observing the similar structures as well as the similar behaviors of people walking around a Buddhist stūpa or around a Shiʿi mausoleum. This similarity is striking in that both walk around a well-decorated chamber, tying ribbons on the window grills and burning candles for devotional and spiritual purposes.

Some of the Historical Shrines

Historically speaking, there are several old stūpa-shaped shrines in southern Iran that are attributed to Khidr, the fictional prophet. There is a semi-ruined shrine (called *būq'a*) of Khidr in Bandar ʿAbbās, whose architectural resemblance to a Buddhist stūpa is hardly disputable. This shrine has a square foundation and several bulging circular shapes underneath the dome. It is similar in structure to the Khidr shrine in Būshir, which also has Indian temple-style architecture. Many of the

shrines honoring Khidr in the Persian Gulf region use Indian- and Buddhist-style architecture;[133] the same style of architecture is followed in the islands of Qishm, Hormūz, and Khārg. All these shrines need further investigation and comparative studies before their Buddhist origins are firmly established.

It should also be remembered that the Buddhist Mongols who ruled Iran left their share of architectural heritage behind. Apart from a number of Sufi shrines, they built the magnificent stūpa-shaped structure known as the tomb of Ōljaitü (r. 1304–1316) in Sultānīya, the capital of the later Mongols.[134] The local people of Sultānīya hold the opinion that in fact nobody is buried in the complex, which suggests that the original intention behind building this gigantic stūpa was as a lasting legacy initiated by the Buddhist Arghūn. The conversion of Ghāzān Khan from Buddhism to Islam in 1295 and of his brother Ōljaitü from Christianity first to Buddhism and finally to Islam creates ambiguity in the original intention behind the structure in Sultānīya. Ōljaitü was originally a Buddhist, and this structure was not meant to be his tomb, so the tomb rumor may have arisen after his conversion to Islam, though the *lamas* (Tibetan Buddhist priests) tried in vain to convert Ōljaitü back to Buddhism.[135] In the post–Il-Khānid period, many Buddhist complexes were either destroyed or adapted into mosques and shrines. The Sultānīya complex was consequently popularized as the "mausoleum" of Ōljaitü. It remains standing with a mistaken identity in the middle of a vast land where anything linked to Buddhism is unmentionable.



Figure 6.1 Il-Khan "Stupa" of Sultaniya, Iran

Conclusion

Obviously the ideas of having burial sites and mausolea have been around since ancient times in many cultures. The early Muslims, however, including the Prophet and even up to the time of 'Abbāsid caliphs, were buried in cemeteries and their own houses.[136]Therefore there is no pre-Islamic Arab tradition of mausolea and certainly no Zoroastrian tradition, either since they exposed the corpses to scavengers.[137]Although Hillenbrand argues that the initial idea of a mausoleum in Islam originates from the Christian culture of honoring mausolea particularly in the Syrian region,[138] it must be argued that Khurāsān and inner Iran would have been more influenced by the Buddhist concept of the stūpa.

We have seen that the practice of building shrines or burial sites of holy people for pilgrimage purposes and the act of circumambulation around a cubical domed structure became established in Shiʿism. Many newly built shrines were modeled after stūpas, and old shrines lost their pre-Islamic status and were culturally refurbished. Regardless of the age of the shrine, the decoration of the domed chamber, the acts of circumambulation and veneration, and other ritual and spiritual practices attached to the post-Islamic shrine remain strikingly similar to the Buddhist culture of iconography and ritualism. Depicting persons of sanctity close to the highest authority in Islam—Mohammad—or building shrines and performing rituals around them had no Islamic justification and was in fact incompatible with Islamic iconoclasm. Following the example of Aśoka's initial distribution of the Buddha's relics in vast territories to give legitimacy to the Buddhist civilization, the heads of Islamic governments spread the authority of Islam by enshrining the relics of Mohammad and various holy figures of Islam in order to tie together and legitimize the religion with civilization.[139]Thus Shiʿi and Sufi shrines named after numerous holy figures have been perhaps an outgrowth and even unintentional authentication of continuing the old sacramental tradition and iconography that were once familiar in the Iranian and eastern outlying territories.

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Chapter 7

Buddhism during the Mongol Period in Iran

In the search for physical traces of Buddhism after the fourteenth-century fall of the Il-Khan Mongols in Iran, we find almost nothing with a concrete Buddhist signature, even though the Mongols' first five rulers were Buddhist. This lack of evidence is due to the conversion of the late Il-Khans to Islam and the consequent eradication or transformation of traces of Buddhism; the only concrete Buddhist remnant we have from this period is in the work of a well-known historian of the time, Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh Hamadānī (d. 1318), who recorded the life and doctrine of the Buddha. This historical writing, known as *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* is a magnificent work that will be highlighted and analyzed in the first part of this chapter.

Despite the lack of concrete evidence, the influences of the Il-Khan Mongol in general on art, iconography, architecture, and mysticism are indisputably present. In the second section of this chapter, another aspect of Mongol Buddhism will be considered, namely the Sufism that emerged out of the Buddhist environment as pioneered by a prominent personality of the time, Alā' ad-Dawla Simnānī (d. 1336). Even though Simnānī lived the latter part of his life during the Islamic age of the converted Mongols, it is difficult to separate his Sufism from the once-significant Buddhist culture of the Il-Khan era, coming from a Buddhist milieu as he did. Simnānī's connection with Buddhism and his eventual emergence as a Sufi along with Amīr Seyyid 'Ali Hamadānī, another prominent Sufi of the time who lived in Buddhist areas, will be discussed.

Part I. Buddhism in Persian Historiography

Prelude

The irony is that the parochial conflict and tribal rivalry in Mongolia that led young Temujin (Changiz Khan) to cause some of the worst human devastation in history simultaneously set the stage for Buddhism, a nonviolent doctrine, to spread in Asia, including in Iran. Changiz's grandsons, Hülagü and Kublai, stepped away from the traditional shamanism of their grandfather, in which divination of the ruler and

astrology were central,[1] and converted to Buddhism.[2] Hülagü, as a Buddhist convert, set out to invade Iran, marched all the way to Baghdad, and toppled the 500-year-old institution of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate, the most important religio-political anchor of the Islamic societies. The year 1258 marked the killing of the last caliph, al-Musta'sim-billāh. The Mongol destruction of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate was thus viewed as a disaster and a serious blow to the prestige of Islam, yet brought political delight to Christian Europe and bolstered the non-Muslim population in Iran and within the Islamic caliphate. The end of the Sunni caliphate created a long-run advantage and for the Shi'i authority to expand after the fall of the Il-Khans in Iraq and Iran in the centuries to follow.[3]

Changiz's grandson Kublai Khan became the Buddhist ruler of China in the same way Hülagü became the Buddhist ruler of Western Asia and Iran. Hülagü established the Il-Khānid Empire,[4] the first government ever to unify Iran since the Sasanid overthrow in the seventh century. Hülagü chose the city of Marāgheh in northwestern Iran as his new capital in 1260. His determination to introduce Buddhism in Iran, a society that had accumulated over 600 years of Islamic history, was a challenge that his grandchildren carried forward. There is no doubt that Hülagü, his son Abaqa, his grandson Arghūn, and his great-grandson Ghāzān were all Buddhist.[5] They maintained their Mongolian names until Ghāzān and his brother Ōljaitü converted to Islam. The most ardent Buddhist of these was Arghūn (1284–1291). During Arghūn's rule, Mongolian shamanism, which had continued as a cultural practice alongside Buddhism from the time of Hülagü, completely lost its official status.[6] Despite this, after the Buddhist Mongol era had shifted to Islam, the mystical aspect of shamanism, although conceptually different, was perhaps one reason the Mongol court stayed respectful and open to Sufism.[7]

Although the Mongols later became religiously tolerant, the alliance and service of the Muslims to the Buddhist Mongols remained fraught with tensions. Generally the Muslims saw the Mongols as pagans to be fought against, and the Mongol habits such as their improper slaughtering of sheep induced many Muslim merchants to depart from the land.[8] In the same polemical context, the earlier Buddhists (as reflected in the eleventh-century *Kālacakra*) perceived the Muslims to be slaughtering animals and cooking meat in a barbaric way as well.[9]

There were other political reasons for such tensions. At some point the early Mongols thought that because the early Muslims had used force to impose their religion in expanding their empire, the Mongols themselves could do the same. The Mongols even considered for a short time a grand plan of transforming Kaʿba into an idol temple (perhaps a Buddhist temple).[10] The tribal and religious discrimination early in the Il-Khan Mongols' rule is evident from the relatively low number of Perso-Muslim names in governmental positions. Under Hülagü during Buddhist times, about 6 percent of government positions were held by people with Perso-Muslim names. This number increased to 10 percent under Abaqa, 11 percent under Tegüder (brother of Abaqa, deposed by his nephew Arghūn), 13 percent under Arghūn, and 21 percent under Ghāzān, who himself ultimately converted to Sufi Islam.[11]

And so it was that with Ghāzān's conversion the final presence of Buddhism in Iran, which lasted for almost half a century, was brought almost to an end.

Buddhism did not end completely with Ghāzān's conversion, since his brother and successor Ōljaitü had converted to Buddhism for a short time. The abrupt change in religious politics occurred on June 16, 1295, when Ghāzān converted from Buddhism to Islam before Shaykh Sadr al-Dīn Ibrāhim Hamawī in Fīrouzkūh [12] and took the title of *Pādishāh-i Islam* (the king of Islamic lands). However, no one was very clear about the sincerity of his conversion or what he understood about Islam. Ōljaitü wrote about Ghāzān in a letter to the Mamlūk Sultan: "He was a Muslim on the outside, but an infidel on the inside."[13] Not surprisingly then, Ghāzān's convictions and behavior collided at times, especially when he married the wife of his deceased father, Arghūn, an act that was forbidden under Islamic law but apparently permitted under Mongol law (*yāsā*).[14] So whether his conversion was a political move to save his throne in the face of mounting opposition by the Muslim religious leaders against the foreign Buddhist religion brought by his forefathers or a sign of his fidelity toward the Mongol or shamanistic way of life cannot be determined.[15] It does seem that social and political pressure had increasingly cornered the Mongols in Iran. The Mongols, however, continued to demonstrate how to instrumentalize religion, whether Buddhism or Islam, for their political ends.[16]

After his conversion, Ghāzān ordered the transformation of religious life from Buddhism to Islam, which included converting Buddhist temples into Islamic shrines and mosques[17] as well as pursuing a policy of charitable enterprise. Ghāzān's unexpected preference for Islam over Buddhism caused the sudden interruption of Buddhist life, philosophy, literature, art, and mysticism at least on the surface. The new policy sought to eradicate all visible traces of Buddhist heritage in Iran. For this reason, no obvious physical signs of the Buddhist era such as statues of the Buddha, temples, or other perceptible icons can be found throughout Iran. This physical eradication of Buddhism, however, did not succeed in completely preventing Buddhist influences from permeating different fields of culture. Seeds of a synthesis of Buddhist, Islamic, Central Asian, and Iranian cultural elements were planted during the half-century of Buddhist dominance in Iran in the thirteenth century. These seeds were destined to grow in the centuries to come.

Buddhism's decline was not immediate. Toward the later part of the Buddhist Mongol era when Buddhism still dominated the court (that is, during the several decades between 1258 and 1295), a great number of Buddhist monks from Tibet, Kashmir, and Central Asia had been brought to Iran. Thus the conversion of Ghāzān to Islam did not immediately end the life of Buddhism either in the court or in its periphery, since the Buddhist priests did not leave Iran immediately. There was still hope for Buddhism despite Ghāzān's conversion. Even Ghāzān's brother Ōljaitü, after renouncing Christianity, had become Buddhist but then converted to Islam. The Buddhist priests tried to reconvert Ōljaitü back to Buddhism in the early 1300s but in vain.[18] This indicates that there were still Buddhist priests in Iran and around Tabriz[19] as well as Sultānīya (the two capitals of the Il-Khans) prior to Ōljaitü's death in 1316. When Ōljaitü was succeeded by Abū Sa'īd, the Buddhists had to seek refuge by going underground, fleeing the country, or converting to Islam. This was the period when Rashīd al-Dīn himself and his foundation in Tabriz, as well as his historical production, met their demise. In 1318 at the age of 71, Rashīd al-Dīn was

accused of having conspired against and poisoned the Il-Khan Ōljaitü, and eventually he was put to death.[20]

The cultural changes and the hybridity of Buddhism in Iran were manifested in different forms. Although a few points will be mentioned here, the Buddhist influences on Iranian art and iconography in post-Mongol Iran still require further research and analysis. Artistry in Iran was one area where these Mongol seeds took firm root. Even in the post-Mongol period, the art of the miniature in Iran and Central Asia continued to be influenced by the Chinese (Turkistan and Uighur[21]) style due to the introduction of this unique art form at the time of the Mongols.[22] The miniatures in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* show Chinese and Mongol influences on images with headdresses, long robes, and belts, all against the Islamic prohibition on public pictorial representation.[23] Uighur/Chinese artists were employed to carry out mural art work for the Buddhist monasteries in Iran and the Near East during the Mongol period. Their style of work, particularly, with Buddhist iconographic motifs such as a monarch enthroned while seated cross-legged or using deer as companion animals, along with some Manichaean motifs, influenced mural and miniature production in both earlier and later Mongol periods in Iran.[24] Even after the demise of Buddhism in Iran, the Buddhist iconographic style did not completely fade away in miniature, and the themes were largely replaced by other poetical and mythical iconography. From 1400 to 1450, certain Persian drawings influenced by the Chinese style exhibit Buddhist iconography.[25] Other areas such as ceramic work and architecture sustained influences that had originated from the multiethnic group of the Buddhist artists who resided in Iran for over half a century.Historiography was another field that introduced the Buddha and Buddhism to Iranian cultural life.

The Life of the Buddha in the Fourteenth-Century Persian Writings

The triumph of the Mongols and their introduction of Buddhism to Iran was also the period when a member of Iran's cultural elite, a famous physician, politician, and historian of that era, Rashīd al-Dīn, completed his masterly work on the history of the world, which included a narrative on Buddha's life and teachings. Rashīd al-Dīn was a Jewish native of Hamadān whose date of conversion to Islam is said to be 1298, though this is uncertain. Through the close ties of the Qalandarī Sufis with the Il-Khans, young Rashīd al-Dīn was introduced to the court by the dervish Ishān Mengli,[26] a contact that lasted several decades. Rashīd al-Dīn entered the court of Il-Khan Abaqa (1265–1281) first as a physician, later as a politician, and eventually as a historian commissioned in 1300 by Ghāzān Khan (1295–1304) and Ōljaitü (1304–1316) to write the world history. Thus Rashīd al-Dīn became one of the most versatile public figures of Iranian intellectual life.

Under his commission, Rashīd al-Dīn produced the most comprehensive historical records including Buddhism in his famous *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* (Comprehensive History).[27] Of particular interest in Rashīd al-Dīn's massive encyclopedic historical writings are the chronicles of the Buddha's life and teachings. Equally of interest is how the Buddha's life and teachings were perceived and presented to the Iranian readership during the turbulent political time of the fall of Buddhism and the

peculiar circumstances between Ghāzān's conversion in 1295, and 1318, the death of Rashīd al-Dīn.

In the midst of this critical period, Rashīd al-Dīn's historical work, although for a large part destroyed later on, remarkably retained a detailed section on the life of the Buddha, his teachings, and various aspects of Buddhism. This was the first time in Islamic Iran that the teachings of Buddhism had been preserved in such detail, other than for brief and innocuous references by medieval writers such as Ibn Nadīm, Mas'ūdī, Birunī, Gardīzī, and Shahrastānī in their respective works.

It is clear that Rashīd al-Dīn was both a compiler of all the chronicles he received from Indian, Chinese, and other colleagues, as well as a contributor to the historical writings. Hence the areas of his authorship, editorship, and interpretation of historical material remain somewhat unclear since it cannot be established with certainty which parts are his additions and which parts are compiled from others.[28] In the section on the Buddha's life, it is certain that he used a contribution from the mentorship and writing of Kamālashrī, a Kashmiri Buddhist monk or *bakhshī* (*bhikṣu* in Sanskrit), but the section seems to also include Rashīd al-Dīn's own adaptation of the text for a Muslim readership. This also points out the fact that the Buddhist adepts such as Kamālashrī had remained in Iran despite Ghāzān's conversion to Islam. The Buddhist historiographical achievement of Rashīd al-Dīn thus involved the unique contribution of introducing the core teachings of Buddhism and the life of the Buddha to a nation that had been Muslim for several centuries.

Rashīd al-Dīn thus became an iconic historian in the early fourteenth century who brought Buddhism from its obscure state into literary historical writing; his work became the basis for the later Timūrīd historian Hāfīz Abru (d.1430)[29] to replicate the illustrated life of the Buddha in his *Majma' al-Tawārīkh* at the court of Shāhrukh, the son of Timūr, in fifteenth-century Herat.

The Sources of Conceptualization of the Buddha's Life

Biruni's intellectual work on Indian Brahmanism in the eleventh century and Rashīd al-Dīn's writings on Buddhism about 300 years later are both examples of works regarded as valuable and original even though the authors themselves were not Indian Brahman or Buddhist.[30]

Rashīd al-Dīn's descriptions of the life and teachings of the Buddha in the Persian historiographical work supported by the Kashmiri Buddhist monk Kamālashrī became a unique joint Iranian-Buddhist intellectual enterprise. The clever approach that Rashīd al-Dīn took in covering Buddhism was to bridge the Buddhist content with Islamic terminologies. For example, he used the designation of the *prophet* of God for the Buddha, an approach likely calculated to make it acceptable to a Muslim audience, since his task was undertaken not at the peak of Buddhist power, but during its decline.

An important question has remained, whether the version of Buddhism presented by Kamālashrī and Rashīd al-Dīn reflected the belief and practice of the Tibetan form of Buddhism upheld by the Il-Khan elites, or some other form of Buddhism. There are not enough writings about the Buddhism of the Il-Khans to establish with certainty whether Tibetan Buddhism evolved consistently with the

Il-Khan rulers of Iran in the latter part of the thirteenth century.[31] Two studies have been carried out on the sources from the particular school of Buddhism that Kamālashrī used in depicting the story of the Buddha in an attempt to try to shed light on this question.

The first study, by Karl Jahn, assesses the sources that Kamālashrī may have used in constructing his version of Buddha's teachings. Jahn believes the multiple Buddhist versions used in constructing the chapters on Buddhism in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* are predominantly Kashmiri and north Indian as well as Chinese, rather than eastern Mongol or even Tibetan versions of Buddhism.[32] Rashīd al-Dīn probably intended to present a version of Buddhism that was already in practice and was to be promoted in Iran. The Mongols in Iran, perhaps due to the historical Tibetan missionary work in Mongolia, showed a strong affinity for Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhism, and thus it was unlikely, despite Jahn's suggestion, that the historical writings would have betrayed the expectations of the Mongol elites. Thus Jahn's study did not shed enough light on the sources used to compose Buddhism in the Persian historical writings.

Gregory Schopen reevaluated Kamālashrī's access to and usage of the Buddhist sources presented to the Iranians in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* in a second study almost 26 years after Karl Jahn's paper appeared. In his study, Schopen presents at least three other sources that Jahn was unable to identify precisely among the sources used by Kamālashrī in constructing the chapters on Buddhism. Schopen identifies two of the sources used by Kamālashrī as Tibetan translations of texts that have their roots in what is known as the Gilgit manuscript as well as in Sanskrit and Pali texts, which all point to the Hinayāna (Theravāda) school of Buddhism.[33] The third source was a Nepali text that had its roots in a Sanskrit text dealing with the coming of the future Buddha, *maitreya*. This appeared in chapter 17 of the Persian text of Rashīd al-Dīn.[34]

Jahn's proposition of Kashmirian and north Indian sources was therefore challenged by Schopen's proposition of Tibetan and Nepali sources. Also significant is that while Jahn had assumed that Mahāyāna sources were used in *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*,[35] Schopen argues that they came from Hinayāna sources.[36] The significant difference of opinion between these two scholars is not based primarily on the language of translation of the texts used by Kamālashrī and Rashīd al-Dīn, but rather on the geographical location and doctrinal and terminological adjustments made in those texts. We can conclude that Kamālashrī intended to present Tibetan and Nepali Mahāyāna sources, but was perhaps unaware that they may have been translations of the original Hinayāna sources. Thus the Il-Khan Mongol affinity toward Tibetan Buddhism was honored in the writings, except that Kamālashrī and Rashīd al-Dīn themselves did not know that their Tibetan and Nepali versions were translations of non-Tibetan Buddhist sources.

Rashīd al-Dīn had taken the traditional Tibetan and Nepali accounts given to him by Kamālashrī and presented his own construction in eloquent language. These 20 chapters include many Indian names and Sanskrit terminologies. This historical and biographical presentation would have seemed foreign to fourteenth-century Muslims who confronted for the first time not only unfamiliar religious terminologies and concepts, but also the biography of a non-Abrahamic "prophet"

who was not acknowledged as a rightful prophet by the iconoclastic Muslims and was viewed with suspicion.

To reduce the tension, Rashīd al-Dīn employed many Islamic terminologies to strengthen his presentation for the Muslim audience while avoiding terms that might offend them. He cleverly avoided using the familiar name, *Buddha*, and instead used the Buddha's tribal designation "Shakyamuni" throughout the text of his *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* a name not so familiar to non-Buddhists. Rashīd al-Dīn was sensitive (as was Kamālashrī to a lesser extent) to the fact that Buddhism and other Indian religions were associated with idol-worshipping and polytheism in the eyes of zealot Muslims in Iran and elsewhere. So Rashīd al-Dīn intentionally used a subtle introduction, presenting the Buddha under the name *Shakyamuni*, and designating Shakyamuni the status of a prophet.

The Buddha in *Jāmi' al-Tāwarīkh*

Here let us summarize and put in perspective the account of the Buddha's life as recounted in 20 chapters in the Persian version of *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh.*

These chapters commence with some religious background information, referring to the Indian religious traditions and their prophets. Rashīd al-Dīn explains that India has many prophets, but only six of them possess a *sharī'a* (canonical theology), including Viśnu, Brahma, Śiva, and finally Shakyamuni (the Buddha). Rashīd al-Dīn gave Shakyamuni status above all other Indian prophets, and claimed that the followers of Shakyamuni called him the prophet of compassion, as opposed to other Indian prophets.[37] In the same section the text refers to Shakyamuni's "holy book" called *Abhidharma,* which contains the essential teachings of the previous prophets who have come to refresh the religion every now and then—thus he who reads *Abhidharma* will be reading the teachings of other prophets as well.[38] This assertion by Rashīd al-Dīn and Kamālashrī was also intended to bolster the status of the Buddha, presenting him as a prophet who, like the biblical prophets, had a book. In fact, as we know, the Buddha had no "holy book." The *Abhidharma* was just one of the important books produced by the later Buddhists compiling the highest philosophical teachings of the Buddha in regard to the inner working of the mind. Linking the notion of a "holy book" to the Buddha was intended to associate the teachings of the Buddha with the teachings of other prophets and putting the Buddha on a par with Muslims' conception of prophets who had divine books, *ahl-i kitāb*, a strategy that Rashīd al-Dīn used to try to persuade Muslims in Iran to soften their attitude toward Buddhism.

The next section of the text depicts the details surrounding the birth of the baby Buddha:

Buddha's father was the king of the land; his mother gave birth to him while holding onto a branch of a tree in the forest. In the hour he first entered the world, the Buddha took seven steps; under each step flowers blossomed and hidden treasures surfaced. After the seventh step Shakyamuni looked in the four directions and said, "this is my last birth . . . I shall no longer come back. By transiting this world I shall purify my existence and shall go back to my own *'ālam* (universe)."

While growing up, Shakyamuni was well protected in the palace. He showed no signs of attachment to luxurious life. He was 29 years old when, on a tour of the city, he observed four human conditions: the sick, the old, the dead, and a monk. Shakyamuni then secretly decided to leave the palace to join the group of ascetics near the Ganges River. There he shaved his head and sent part of his hair to his parents in the palace; the rest of his hair was to be taken to the eighth Heaven by the angels. For six years he practiced austerity until he received a revelation from Heaven calling him to a mission.[39]

Rashīd al-Dīn does not elaborate further on the content of this revelation, but naturally after six years of meditation and ascetic practices, Shakyamuni had reached *nīrvāna*, something that Rashīd al-Dīn shrewdly equates with revelation for his audience. In the same section, Rashīd al-Dīn asserts that in other religions (including Islam) Shakyamuni is believed to be Adam, whose footprint had remained in the stone on a mountain top in Serendīp (Sri Lanka). (Like other medieval Muslim authors, Rashīd al-Dīn was unable to justify how the Buddha and Adam could be identical.)

Rashīd al-Dīn goes on to describe the battle in which Shakyamuni defeated and embarrassed *iblīs* (the devil), who eventually surrendered to Shakyamuni's spiritual strength. The Arabic *iblīs* is made equivalent to Pali *māra*, the demonic goddess of illusion and temptation who attempted to prevent the Buddha from attaining *nīrvāna*. Rashīd al-Dīn explains that after having attained enlightenment, Shakyamuni spoke about ten evil deeds that should be avoided: three stemming from the ego, four from the tongue, and three from the heart. Shakyamuni is also described as laying the foundation of his "Eightfold Path." In the scenario as told by Rashīd al-Dīn, a fakir was mortifying himself in an attempt at enlightenment when Shakyamuni showed the fakir the middle path by denouncing extreme ascetic practices. Shakyamuni further established vegetarianism, fasting, and *ahimsā* (nonviolence and not slaughtering animals) in his dialogue with the fakir.[40]

In chapter 8, Rashīd al-Dīn maintains the opinion that Shakyamuni had been born and reborn 84, 000 times in various human situations. In one of these situations, Shakyamuni appeared as a merchant who rescued a young man from going astray and prevented him from continuous births and deaths or *samsāra*. In another life Shakyamuni advised a young man to avoid his passion for seducing women as a means of release from the unsatisfactoriness of life, and guided him to the practice of celibacy.[41]

Chapters 10–15 cover various levels into which one might be reincarnated. Rashīd al-Dīn explains that in the cycle of *samsāra*, human beings can be born into six categories of beings according to their deeds or *karma*: proceeding from lowest to highest, these categories include being born in hell, being born as a suffering devil, being born as an animal, being born as a human, being born between the worlds of human and angel, and finally being born to the highest level as an angel. In chapter 12, as an example, a human being is reincarnated as a donkey because of his egoism and his habit of putting others and their ideas down.[42] Rashīd al-Dīn also presents the Buddhist idea that people are born with certain personalities and are predisposed to be wise, ignorant, suffering, or confused. The dominant message is that a person will be punished and rewarded in the cycle of coming and going in

this world, rather than being judged or rewarded at the end of time, either punished in hell or rewarded in heaven. The karmic rebound—the return of deeds, whether good or bad, to the doer, is a Buddhist idea that Rashīd al-Dīn treated well.[43]

In the next section covering Shakyamuni's life, Rashīd al-Dīn discusses how the angels tested Shakyamuni's mental capacity by asking him various levels of moral and intellectual questions. In some of the answers that Shakyamuni provided to the angels he spoke of *insān-i kāmīl* (the perfect human being). This human being is one who frees people from poverty and ignorance, gives alms, and transcends the cold intellect in order to the reach the absolute truth.[44] Shakyamuni also foretold the coming of *maitreya*, the future Buddha. Upon the birth of *maitreya*, who shall be the last Buddha, all the unsatisfactory conditions that human beings confront will be eradicated; ignorance, confusion, greed, anger, and jealousy will be no more.[45]

The theme of chapter 18 is that Shakyamuni was queried about heaven and hell and their aftermath. He responded that our present bodily constitution cannot handle the burning of hell, nor does it have the capacity to appreciate the richness of heaven. Hell burns the body, which crumbles immediately, and to ascend to heaven a more advanced type of constitution is required than our existing body. Shakyamuni implicitly rejected physical resurrection for the final judgment. For this part, Rashīd al-Dīn used implicit language to deflect attention from the conventional Islamic understandings of heaven and hell with their extraordinary characteristics. He instead communicated the Buddha's conception that human behavior is rewarded and punished through earthly conditions, rather than in heaven or hell.

In chapter 19, Rashīd al-Dīn lists regions and communities who previously practiced Buddhism and had been followers of Shakyamuni. This list includes the places well known to have adopted Buddhism, such as China, Tibet, Kathmandu, certain areas of India, Central Asia, and Khurāsān. But Rashīd al-Dīn and Kamālashrī also declare some areas to have been Buddhist for which there is still not sufficient evidence but which are certainly intriguing to consider. One incredible assertion is that before the coming of Islam, the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina and other Arabs and *'ajam* (Persians) were followers of Shakyamuni. In Ka'ba, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, statues with features similar to Shakyamuni's were kept and venerated until the Prophet of Islam ordered the destruction of such idols.[46] Rashīd al-Dīn mentions other followers of Shakyamuni in areas of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt whose beliefs eventually merged with some form of Shaivism (Śiva cult). Furthermore he asserts that Habash (Ethiopia) and Zang (Zanzibar) once followed Buddhism.[47] Rashīd al-Dīn's assertions could potentially corroborate with the ambitions of kings such as Aśoka in the third century B.C.E. and Kaniśka in the second century C.E., under whose kingdoms Buddhist missionaries and merchants carried Buddhism by land and sea to many places. In fact, even before Rashīd al-Dīn, Biruni wrote of the expansion of Buddhism westward to Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

Chapter 20, the last chapter of Rashīd al-Dīn's section on Buddha's life, reports *parinīrvāna* (the final passing away) of Shakyamuni in Kuśināra, India. The death of Shakyamuni is depicted as happening under a transparent dome where he lay down like a lion and went to sleep. At the moment of his passing away, a flash of light from the dome went straight up into the sky. After three days a man arrived in Kuśināra to benefit from the teachings of Shakyamuni, and when he learned

that the Buddha had passed away, he began to cry. In his despair he looked up at the sky and saw Shakyamuni sending him this message: "I was not born or dead, I did not come from anywhere nor shall I go anywhere." Upon receiving this message the man was thrilled and experienced an insight about which he later wrote an inspiring book.

In the last section of chapter 20, Rashīd al-Dīn reminds his readers that all the foregoing accounts of the Buddha were reported according to the accounts of the people of Kashmir and India. He includes a personal section of commentaries rejecting the Buddhist notion of *tanāsukh* (reincarnation), which may have been a later addition by him or perhaps someone else. One can surmise that this commentary was written after Rashīd al-Dīn converted to Islam, and perhaps after Ōljaitū overcame his indecisiveness and also converted. After 1316, when Ōljaitū died and Abū Sa'īd took power, which led to the death of Rashīd al-Dīn in 1318, much religious confusion and debates occurred, since Iran was again set on the path of Islamization under the new rule of Abū Sa'īd (r. 1316–1335). Despite the religious and cultural readjustments in Iran, the Buddhist narrative found a permanent status in Persian historiography of the fourteenth century.

* * *

By recording the life and the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni in Āzarbāijān of Iran between the late thirteenth century and the early years of the fourteenth century, Rashīd al-Dīn rendered an unprecedented intellectual service of a magnitude no other historian before him had achieved. Despite the missing parts, his diligent coverage of world history, science, culture, religions, and customs of people in rarely addressed areas of the world makes *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* unique in its style and content.[48]

Besides its literary and historical importance, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* was significant for its pictorial representations and illustrations, including in the section on the Buddha Shakyamuni. Although pictorial representation went against Islamic principles, immigrant monks and Chinese and Uighur artists at the court of Arghūn received support from the Buddhist priests to exhibit their Buddhist art.[49] Visual art became another way of promoting Buddhism in Iran as the artists adapted their native artistic style to respect the norms of the local culture. From the Buddha's attainment of *nīrvāna* to his final passing away, in the visual art he is shown as a respectable prophet, fully clothed and even wearing a turban and beard according to Islamic custom, unlike in a Buddhist setting when he has been depicted half-naked. In an interesting short study, Sheila Canby[50] has compared the Buddha's depiction in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* of the fourteenth century with a similar undertaking of Hāfiz Abru's fifteenth-century *Majma' al-Tawārīkh*. Both texts have similarly portrayed him in full Islamic dress—completely adapted to the Islamic outlook. In one scene the Buddha is standing under a tree talking with a Brahmin whose skin color is shown as darker than the Buddha's fair skin. The Brahmin's dress is more representative of Indian clothing than the Buddha's outfit, which is represented more like that of a Near Eastern Muslim. In fact in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* the depiction of Mohammad's outfit and look while receiving the

revelation from Angel Gabriel is almost identical to the Buddha's Islamic appearance.[51] An illustration in the *Majma' al-Tawārīkh* depicts the mother of the Buddha, Mahāmaya, as fully dressed with her hair and shoulders covered with a typical Muslim *hijāb*, giving birth to the Buddha in the forest while holding on the branch of a tree as the original Buddhist legend reported the birth. Even the mother of the Buddha stood for a respectable holy woman who had met the requirements of the dress code for a woman in Islam.

The *Majma' al-Tawārīkh*'s illustrations of the death of the Buddha draw our attention to three aspects. First, the Buddha dies in a building resembling a Timūrid shrine typical of the Samarqand style. Second, the Buddha's corpse lies fully dressed. He is not wrapped in a shroud, nor is he in the coffin, as he would have been for the Muslim ceremony for the dead. Here we observe a breach in the Islamic code. Third, in the East Asian model the Buddha rests his head on his right hand, but in the Persian illustration in the *Majma' al-Tawārīkh* the Buddha rests his head on his left hand.[52]

In *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* other illustrations of the Buddha's life follow the typical Buddhist iconography with some Persian and Islamic adjustments. In one illustration, the Buddha offers two pomegranates to Satan (*iblīs*), the pomegranate being a fruit much more closely associated with Iran.[53] In depicting the architecture around the sacred place where the Buddha experienced *nīrvāna* and *parinīrvāna* in Kuśināra, the artists typically used Persian-style buildings with a dome shape made of crystal[54] as a replacement for the stūpa, the traditional dome-shaped Buddhist structure.

Conclusion

During the Mongol period there were religious rifts on several levels. The fall of the 500-year-old 'Abbāsid Caliphate diminished the power of the Sunnis and opened new possibilities for the Shi'i communities in Iran and Iraq. In addition, the Mongols introduced Buddhism, a completely different religion, to Iran and changed the dynamics of Iranian culture for at least half a century. Displacements of religious groups, the rise of militancy, and the transformation of culture all happened while general solidarity was being weakened. The sociocultural stage that followed the introduction of Buddhism to Iran reduced the power of Islam while Sufism gained more power than ever.

The introduction of Buddhism to Iran brought with it new centers of Buddhist learning, monasticism, art, and historiography. Moreover, the power of the Sufis and the affinity of the Buddhists for Sufism created a launching pad for a new type of mysticism that surfaced in the post-Mongol period in Iran and Central Asia. Because of this affinity, when Buddhism was rejected, many of the Buddhist centers turned into Sufi centers and shrines. Historians such as Rashīd al-Dīn attempted to create a new attitude of respect for the stereotyped Buddhist doctrine in a Muslim country. Despite all the efforts after the tumultuous events and the fall of the Buddhist Mongols in 1335, eventually the culture of Sufism became the carrier of solace and solidarity. After the experience of Buddhism for half a century, neither Iran and Islam nor Sufism as a whole could remain indifferent to the permeating

influences that Buddhism had established. However, the legend and teachings of the Buddha as reflected in the historical writings of Rashīd al-Dīn are the only concrete remnant in our possession from that final Buddhist era.

Part II. The Sufism of Simnānī: An Echo of Buddhism of the Mongol Era

Anthropology in Brief

Alā' ad-Dawla Simnānī is known to be a Sufi of the Mongol period in Iran, but his Buddhist circumstances hardly accounted for the influences in his life and the direction he took. Before investigating his Buddhist and Sufi contexts, let us briefly put the cultural interactions of the era in perspective. There is almost no concrete scholarly analysis dealing with the interactions between Buddhist culture and Sufism during and in post-Mongol Iran. The anti-Buddhist sentiment and slanted chronicles recorded by later Sufis and Muslim authors have concealed the traces of Buddhism in this period, especially the affinity and interactions between the Sufis and Buddhists. This attempt to downplay such interactions occurred despite the fact that the Il-Khans were Buddhist. However, the presence of hundreds or even thousands of Buddhist adepts in the country must have created a medium of interactions between the non-Buddhists and Buddhists. But there was little obvious evidence left of the Buddhists after Muslim hegemony purged all the Buddhist elements. Because of the thorough eradication of Buddhist elements from the Iranian scene and the lack of explicit mention of Buddhism by the Sufis, it is not easy to fully substantiate every argument regarding the sway of Buddhism in Iranian Sufism other than through circumstantial evidence.

The Islamic and Buddhist relationship has always been tense because of the dogmatic Muslim view of Buddhism as "idolatrous."[55] On an intellectual level, nonetheless, Buddhism was met with tolerance by the Sufis of the time. The new immigrant communities of Buddhists in Iranian cities, particularly Marāgheh, Tabriz, and Sultānīya, coming from Tibet, India, Turkistan, and elsewhere were not peasants or illiterate individuals but adepts, artists, and men of letters who had been brought in with the hope of being the agents of cultural transformation in Iran. The presence of such Buddhist communities must have left an impact, especially in the spiritual and philosophical realm, among a number of highly experienced and spiritually sophisticated Sufis in Iran.

The interaction between Buddhism and Islamic conformism during the early Il-Khan period conceivably remained tense, especially when the Islamic caliphate in Baghdad, the most important religious epitome, was destroyed by the Buddhist Hülagü. The friction increased when various Il-Khan rulers ordered the construction of Buddhist temples throughout Iran. At the beginning of the Il-Khan era, Hülagü ordered the building of a Buddhist temple in Khoy.[56] Hamdullāh Mostaufī in his fourteenth-century geographical account described the population of Khoy as having white complexions and a Khotanese look, referring to the new Buddhist settlers from parts of Turkistan. He said this was why Khoy was called the Turkistan of Iran.[57] Buddhist immigration from Turkistan, Tibet, and northwestern India to

Khoy and eventually Tabriz and Sultānīya must have been on the rise during and after Hülagü. Mostaufī also reports that the city of Sultānīya was peopled by different nationalities and religious communities, though he did not name any particular group or their religious affiliation.[58]

This change in demography and spiritual culture could not have remained without future cultural consequences in Iran. It may have been during this period that some of the rock-hewn caves used for meditation and monastic purposes were created around the country. The culture and demography of Iran were destined to change irreversibly. We cannot know how many Buddhist temples were erected, but we do know that they were either destroyed[59] or transformed into mosques or shrines after the conversions of Ghāzān in 1295 and Ōljaitü sometime before 1316. Buddhist temples were even being erected in Baghdad while they were being built in different cities of Iran.[60] The flood of Buddhist priests and artisans coming to Iran had put the majority Sunni Iranians on their guard.

Some known Buddhist spiritual centers were to be built under the early Il-Khans. Arghūn (r. 1284–1291) began the construction of a Buddhist monastery near the city of Qūchān, which was completed by his son Ghāzān Khan.[61] This monastery would not have survived after Ghāzān's conversion to Islam. Today, however, near Qūchān, there is a village called Bahār. It is said that one of the monasteries Arghūn built had mural paintings including a portrait of the ruler.[62] None seem to have survived.

In Shanab village near Tabriz, Arghūn built another Buddhist temple that his son Ghāzān again ordered to be destroyed after his conversion to Islam. Since this village was Ghāzān's favorite, he did not quit the site completely but instead built a mausoleum and *madrasa* and called the place Ghāzāniyya.[63] According to Guy Le Strange, in the fourteenth century, the Mongol governor Sulaymān Shah ordered the building of the village of Bahār eight miles north of Hamadān.[64] In this case it is obviously a matter of speculation as to why one would build a specific village by the name of *Bahār* in an insignificant area, unless there was presumably a Buddhist temple or Bahār already there that may have been associated with the earlier Buddhist Mongolian heritage.

The transformation of the spiritual centers from Buddhism shifted to Sufism. It was in the first half of the fourteenth century that a number of important Sufi shrines were erected as landmarks for travelers and pilgrims seeking the mediation of a holy man and using the shrine to perform rituals for blessings or for solving their problems,[65] a practice that put the Sunni theologians at odds with this change of direction toward extra-Islamic ceremonial rituals that began with the Mongols.

A large number of the Buddhist monks who were brought to Iran seem to have lingered on at least until the fourteenth century.[66] Given this cultural importation, the building of Buddhist monasteries, and the change of demography, one can imagine what types of debates and interactions took place between the Buddhists and the Muslims (particularly Sufis) in the royal court and at the temple, mosque, and street levels during the decades when these two (seemingly) dissimilar belief systems shared the same geographical space.

What followed in the post-Buddhist era cannot be assumed to be free from reciprocation between Buddhists and Sufis. The common and most dominant

features of Buddhist practices were observed and possibly imitated by the young and highly spiritually charged groups of ascetics and Sufis. Sufis came to share common denominators with their Buddhist counterparts and in fact showed a strong affinity for the Buddhist court of the Il-Khans. It is not surprising that Sufism became popular in the Il-Khans' court even before the Mongols converted from Buddhism to Islam. In the early decades of Mongol rule, one of Hülagü's sons, Tegüder Ahmad (r.1282–1284), converted from Buddhism to Islam through association with the Sufis.[67]

There must have been a compelling spiritual similarity between Buddhism and Sufism for Ghāzān not to wish to become an ordinary Muslim but rather to convert to Sufi Islam. The enterprise of building magnificent shrines for Sufi masters such as Bāyazīd in Bastām of Khurāsān continued to the extent that these shrines became pilgrimage centers. This ritual could feasibly have grown out of imitation of the Buddhist practice in which adherents venerate the presence of a saint in a chamber enshrined in a stūpa (a sacred structure) and perform the act of circumambulation. Pilgrimage to the Sufi shrines grew to be a customary, although not an official, ritual in mainstream Islam, the precursor of Shiʿite pilgrimage habits that would follow in later centuries. As Sufism emerged from its secluded culture and entered mass awareness and the political scene during and after the Mongol period in Iran, it flourished and expanded in many areas that otherwise eschewed religious and political authorities for several centuries, until the rise of the Safavids, at which time the Sufis eventually came under state control.[68]

The fall of the Il-Khans in 1335 meant that all those associated with Buddhism were under pressure to convert, or leave the region. This included Buddhist immigrants by then in their second generation, Buddhist monks, and even those Iranians who had converted to Buddhism, as well as shamans who had come to Iran from Mongolia and whose practices of trance, sorcery, and wonder-working the Sufis admired.[69] However, it has been asserted that even after having converted to Sufi Islam, some of the Buddhist monks in Iran were still practicing their original Buddhism. [70] The conversion from Buddhism to Sufism or vice versa was conceivable since it happened to certain Central Asian, Kashmiri, and Tibetan Buddhists who willingly converted from their Buddhism to Sufism.[71] In addition, the Sufis of post-Mongol Iran must have absorbed Buddhist converts in their groups.[72] The modifications that Buddhism brought to Sufism during this transitional and tumultuous period cannot easily and exactly be measured, even by taking into account the acculturation process, rate, and direction of change, but it is certain that Buddhism was officially rendered ineffective and was outwardly abandoned.

It is helpful, therefore, to use a case study to analyze certain encounters and parallels of Buddhism with the culture of Sufism. We will explore those parallels as manifested by the pioneer Sufi, Simnānī. Simnānī was a well-known personality of the time whose Sufi position and ideas connected the Buddhism of the Il-Khan period with Sufism. We will also briefly discuss Amīr Seyyid ʿAli Hamadānī, another Sufi missionary of the Mongol period who traveled and settled in the Buddhist areas of Kashmir, Baltistān, and Ladakh.

Alā' ad-Dawla Simnānī

Simnānī (1261–1336) was not a Sufi who grew up in the culture of Sufism, but instead started his career in the Buddhist circle of the Il-Khan Mongols. He was the first notable Sufi to have been in very close contact with Buddhism. His early Buddhist environment possibly gave him enough inspiration to naturally create a hybrid between Buddhism and Sufism. The Il-Khan ruler, Arghūn, was an ardent Buddhist, and Simnānī was his most trusted and cherished companion. Their friendship began when Simnānī joined the court at the age of 15 or so, when Arghūn himself was also in his youth.[73] When he took power, Arghūn was hostile toward Islam, preferring to employ Jewish and Christian courtiers alongside Buddhist ones. This implies that Simnānī's paternal affiliation with Arghūn's court and that of Arghūn's father, Abaqa Khan, must have had a tribal[74] as well as a Buddhist interest. Under Arghūn, Simnānī's father became the governor of Baghdad and Iraq, and his uncle became vizier. From this it is doubtful that the young Simnānī and his father had any strong Islamic tendencies.

It is recorded by Simnānī himself that after a decade in the court of Arghūn in Tabriz and Sultānīya, while on a battlefield, he had a mystical vision of the Prophet Mohammad with the great Sufi Bāyazīd, who signaled him to shift his spiritual alliance to Islam and Sufism. After revealing this mystical vision, he was advised by outside Sufi mentors to remain with Arghūn for another year and a half before asking permission to leave. Simnānī claims that he spent the year and a half in asceticism, secretly reading the Koran and practicing Sufi *zikr* (sacred litanies)[75] out of Arghūn's sight. He had apparently at some point come under outside spiritual influences to convert to Sufism.

Simnānī declared himself to be a Sufi, and future generations of Sufis described him as such, not as a Buddhist. Simnānī's ten years with Arghūn and his Buddhist entourage were erased from memory at a time when Buddhism had become unmentionable and embarrassing in a renewed Muslim society, with the weakening of the Buddhist Mongol empire. But as much as Simnānī tried to dissociate himself from Buddhism, it is clear that he had not spent his youth in a total spiritual vacuum—his spiritual environment was filled with Buddhism during the early years in Arghūn's court, and the fact that he had decided to step outside of Buddhism in order to convert to Sufism should be a clue to his non-Sufi origin. The *Sufi* label as an Islamic tag became even more firmly attached to people like Simnānī after the Buddhist Mongols had been weakened and had finally vanished.

A most interesting account of Simnānī was written by his most dedicated disciple, Amīr Iqbāl Sīstānī, after Simnānī settled in the village of Sufī-Ābād, 12 kilometers southwest of Simnān (in Khurāsān) and 5 kilometers from Bīyābānak, Simnānī's birthplace. In his book titled *Chihil Majlis* (*Forty Seminars*), Sīstānī recorded the dialogues and tales recounted by Simnānī. This account is a postconstruction of Simnānī's discourses long after he had left the Il-Khan's court, so Sīstānī as well as Simnānī were free to exaggerate about Simnānī's religious belief in Islam and disbelief in Buddhism during his service to and companionship with Buddhist Arghūn. Amid his postconstruction of the experiences at

Arghūn's court, Simnānī gives away certain clues to the Buddhist experiences in his spiritual quest.

Simnānī's assertion of being a dedicated Muslim or even being brought up as a Muslim is suspect if he really became a close associate of the anti-Muslim Buddhist Arghūn from his teenage years. He described that despite being Muslim, he would never fast or perform his prayers because of the court's belligerent attitude toward Islamic practices.[76] He does, however, emphasize his respect for the practice of meditation, and describes his own practice as well.[77] There were occasional accusations that Simnānī was a pagan or *Hindu,* meaning an adherent of an Indian religion; in popular terminology of the day, it meant *Buddhist.* This inspired him to compose a poem metaphorically blaming himself for not having chosen the straight path of Islam.[78]

The Buddhist sovereign Arghūn is said to have been surrounded mainly by Buddhist advisors and courtiers. The fact that Arghūn was an unbending Buddhist cannot be ignored here. Arghūn and Simnānī grew up together as children. [79] Arghūn was part of the first generation of Iranian-born Mongols to receive a Buddhist education. At the court it was customary for the Buddhist monks to argue with the Muslim scholars to prove the correctness of Arghūn's Buddhist position.[80] Simnānī makes direct references to having listened to and pursued discussions with Buddhist monks while residing in Sultānīya.

In particular, Simnānī recounts in *Chihil Majlis* the story that on one occasion, Arghūn came into a tent where Simnānī was meditating. Arghūn began to tease him; Simnānī ignored him, but Arghūn came and sat closer to him and continued his playful conversation with him. Simnānī would not break his meditation and continued to ignore him. Arghūn felt Simnānī's coldness, moved away from him, and ordered a few monks to come in for discussion as a way to intimidate Simnānī. Arghūn ordered one of the senior monks to question Simnānī on a Buddhist topic to test his knowledge. "The Buddhist monk laughed and said, 'He has been with us since his childhood; what may I ask him?!'" Despite the monk's resistance, Arghūn insisted that he should ask Simnānī something. The monk then turned to Simnānī and asked, "He who is called Alā' ad-Dawla [Simnānī], can you tell which part of your body is called by that name?" This was a deft and relatively difficult question on the philosophy of nonself as part of rhetorical Buddhist intellectualism. Upon hearing this Simnānī fell on his knees and responded to the monk, "The whole [you see] is me." Afterward, according to Simnānī's own claim, he had taken a clever direction with the monk by saying, "I knew the debate would be on the topic of religion [Buddhism]." Simnānī continues, "I turned with a positive gesture to Arghūn and said, 'The heart of our kind king is clear like a mirror, if you listen in all honesty I will prove that this Hindu who is so dear here boasts of knowing the doctrine of Shakyamuni [Buddha] but has nothing to show for it, and does not truly know his religion . . . he is far from God and cannot hear the teachings of Shakyamuni . . . what use to follow him?'"[81]

Upon hearing this criticism, the monk asked Simnānī, "What have I preached contrary to the teachings of Shakyamuni? Say it." Simnānī continued a lengthy polemical criticism, claiming that under the monk's supervision the servants had broken the branches of living plants and trees. He questioned how monks could

be oblivious to the fact that their actions violated the teachings of Shakyamuni. Simnānī thus insinuated that he knew Buddhism better than the monk, and knew that the Buddhist teachings prohibit harming or destroying any living beings, including plants.

The account of *Chihil Majlis* continues this interesting encounter between Arghūn and Simnānī. Arghūn, having heard this argument, pulled Simnānī aside, took his hand, and said to him, "How could someone like you follow an obsolete and false (*bātil*) religion?" Simnānī then asked, "Which obsolete religion?" Arghūn then said, "Your Mohammad's religion." Simnānī replied, "God forbid, the true religion is the religion of Mohammad." Arghūn turned to him and said, "Didn't you this minute say that in Shakyamuni's religion breaking or stepping on branches causes distance from God? But your Mohammad had introduced politics among people to an extent that allowed them to shed blood and he made killing a necessity; isn't this a false religion? Imagine the moral implication of breaking a branch compared to killing masses of people?" Simnānī cleverly responded to Arghūn by drawing a parallel of a dead branch or weed that needs to be removed for the benefit of the plant's growth with removing a pagan for the betterment of the community of the believers. After this conversation, Simnānī points out that the time had come for him to leave the company of Arghūn in order to return to his hometown in Simnān.[82] But according to his biography, his excuse for leaving the palace for Simnān was based on an illness that the physicians could not cure.[83]

It can be assumed that Simnānī's dialogue with Arghūn contained exaggerations and anachronisms. Simnānī was recounting the above story to his disciple decades later when Arghūn was dead and Ghāzān had converted to Islam. In the postconstruction of his biography, Simnānī's possible adherence to Buddhism while he was living in the court of Arghūn had to be denied and covered up because people might suspect that the conversion wasn't genuine. But the fact cannot be erased that he was born and died during the reign of the Il-Khānids while Buddhism was still the doctrine for most of the ruling dynasty. Furthermore, Simnānī had spent his teenage years until his late twenties in a completely Buddhist protected environment, despite his reluctance or perhaps fear to admit it.

His knowledge of Buddhism appears in scattered places. In some of his philosophical discourses Simnānī referred to the concept of reincarnation, which he described as a belief held by *bakhshīs* (the Buddhist monks) of Turkistan and even by certain Muslims.[84] Simnānī did not hesitate to talk about the process of his own enlightenment, during which time he had visualized his seven previous births,[85] much in the same way Buddha recalled his previous births. Simnānī's explanation of enlightenment was that it was a karmic ascendance from a lower being to a perfect human being who can fully perceive his own essence, a state in which one can discern the reality of everything.[86] All of these are strikingly Buddhist concepts.

Furthermore, Simnānī's biographical sketch mentions a prominent Buddhist monk (*bakhshī*) named Parinda. Simnānī befriended and admired Parinda for the depth of his spiritual understanding. This Buddhist friend later sought to visit Simnānī after he left the court in 1286 for a reclusive life in his hometown Bīyābānak near Simnān, but Simnānī is reported to have declined to see his Buddhist monk

friend,[87] perhaps out of fear of being associated with Buddhism, or perhaps this was a boastful embellishment in his postconstruction of the story.

Simnānī sought a highly spiritual life, which triggered his departure from court life. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Simnānī's departure from the palace for an ascetic life resembled the life of the Buddha insofar as the Buddha had also left the palace for an ascetic life at the age of 29. After Simnānī's departure from the palace at the age of 28 or 29 for a quietist ascetic Sufi life, he built several Sufi *khānaqāhs* (fraternities) with the endowment fund he had created,[88] much as Ghāzān did. The *khānaqāh* that he had built in the village of Sufī-Ābād was later destroyed, though the ruins remain today.

The similarity between the spiritual rapture of Simnānī and that of the Buddha is striking and should not be overlooked. Simnānī is said to have had an encounter with the devil, who whispered into his ear, "You have chosen a momentous thing arbitrarily without being certain. A sensible person cannot just abandon the delights of the world—the highest of which is being close to the sultan and clearest of which is the fulfillment of the soul's desire and heart's delight in keeping to one's goal from the days of his youth—without giving it any serious consideration."[89] Simnānī reports more doubts whispered to him by the devil about the futility of fasting, meditation, and abandoning wealth and pleasure. Simnānī responds to the devil, "Indeed, I sought the world and its delights and I attained its highest station; but then my soul turned away from it and its devotees in revulsion. I abandoned it voluntarily, not because I had to... I find such non-wearying delights that in each hour I long to experience what I had in the previous hour. True delight is that which does not tire the one who has it."[90] In fact for Simnānī to follow this path he let go of everything, including his worldly possessions and even his family, in exchange for an ascetic life without worldly attachment or possessions.[91]

The notion of *devil* whispering to him was strongly reminiscent of the *māra*[92] tempting the Buddha and preventing him from attaining *nīrvāna*. It is also quite similar to the story and Buddhist allegory of Ibrāhīm ibn Adham's experience of the devil during his quest for enlightenment. By stripping himself of wealth and princely life and establishing a seminary for Sufi Brotherhood (*Maktab Ikhawān Sufi*) in Sufī-Ābād, Simnānī reminds us of the attempt undertaken by the Buddha to liberate himself from his past princely life and to create his *Sangha* (community of the Buddhists) in Śarnath near Benares. Simnānī not only mentions his own practice of meditation, but also in several instances alludes to his refusal to eat the meat of hunted animals such as deer and rabbits.[93] There is no doubt that Simnānī had learned about and was inspired by the life of the Buddha during the years he had spent in a Buddhist setting in the court of Arghūn. By this Simnānī perhaps even sought to become the "Buddha" of Sufism.

The Buddhist monks in Iran were from the Mahāyāna school, with highly developed meditational and yogic techniques. Simnānī went as far as developing a yogic and spiritual method of interior visualization of seven subtle centers (*chakras*) in the body. This was a psychophysical meditative practice that evolved and was adopted by multiple Sufi groups later, including the Naqshbandī order.[94]

In this way, Simnānī paved the way for the unification of Buddhism and Sufism. For the Buddhist monks, the shift of political culture in Iran made Sufism their

closest intellectual and spiritual refuge. After having officially withdrawn from a political career, Simnānī preached a mystical doctrine that called for unification of all sects, and even appealed to those Buddhists who wished to convert[95] rather than be forced to leave Iran during the vigorous Islamization after Ghāzān's conversion.

Simnānī could definitely discern both the differences and the similarities between Buddhist objectives and those of Sufism. One major difference, at least on the surface, was that in Sufism, because of the Islamic ban, no iconic representations were to be venerated in the way the image of the Buddha was by Buddhists. Wise Buddhist adepts were well aware that the Buddha's essential teachings spoke against all superstitious practices, including the veneration of gods in the form of idols and images. Simnānī once spoke highly of his monk friend, the *bakhshī* Parinda, who had always rejected fanatical idol-worshipping and had contemplated fundamental matters of life and its aftermath, things that brought him closer to Sufi Islam than Buddhism.[96] Here Simnānī basically implies that the content of *bakhshī* Parinda's philosophy and beliefs as a Buddhist monk was similar to Islamic Sufism, bearing in mind that Simnānī himself was familiar with both doctrines and had learned their similarities.

Simnānī was not interested in becoming a Sufi adhering to ritualism of Islam. He is believed to have repeated what other Sufis had said, that the Islamic laws were intended for the ignorant ones, not for those who truly understand the nature of the world.[97] Simnānī chose to be a Sufi in an Islamic community rather than to adhere to Buddhism, but he could not discard what he had learned about Buddhism, and Sufism and Buddhism were so close in key respects that their fusion would be almost unnoticeable even though there were debates between the Muslims and Buddhists.

Simnānī became an associate of a famous Kubrawī master, Nūr al-Dīn Isfarā'inī (d. 1317), then the head of a young Kubrawī Sufi sect. Founded by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, who lived in western Iran between 1146 and 1221, the Kubrawī was a Sufi movement whose adherents sought political leniency and spiritual cooperation with other groups.[98] Yet the core of the Kubrawīs' doctrine lay in developing spiritual *sulūk* (ascendance) and they developed *fann-i rīyādat* (a methodic technique of ascetic practice).[99] Simnānī brought his pioneering mystical hybrid mix of Buddhism and Sufism into the Kubrawi sect that was passed on to practitioners and theoreticians.

Hamadānī's Sufism and the Buddhist World

The critical accomplishment of Sufism during the Mongol era in general was to reduce cultural and religious fragmentation, and in the end it proved to rescue Islam. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were the transitional and formative period of integrating the substrates of leftover Buddhism with Sufism. Under the influence of his maternal relative Simnānī,[100] the polymath Amīr Seyyid 'Ali Hamadānī (1314–1384), a native of Hamadān,[101] became another Sufi personality of the era during which Sufism and Buddhism were each absorbing what the other was exuding. As a Kubrawī Sufi master, Hamadānī traveled extensively[102] in Kashmir, Ladakh, and Central Asia, particularly Baltistan, where he attracted many non-Muslim disciples.

Much of Baltistan was Buddhist until as late as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,[103] and a great part of Ladakh has remained Buddhist to this day (except Kargil and part of Leh). In 1320 the ruler of Kashmir was a Buddhist who later converted to Sufism,[104] but Kashmir is said to have remained generally Buddhist and Hindu until the arrival of Hamadānī's version of Sufism in 1372. Apparently the Sufi version of Islam was allegedly first introduced to Baltistan by Hamadānī.[105] In later centuries, Buddhist regions such as Tibet, Ladakh, Kashmir, and Eastern Turkistan would be populated with Sufi adherents.[106] The immigration of groups from Iran to Kashmir and Ladakh regions[107] in the post-Mongol era and the natural affinity between Buddhism and Sufism created a harmonious coexistence between the two doctrines in the northwestern region of India and on the periphery of the Tibetan plateau.[108] The other visible evidence for the Iranian settlement in Kashmir area can be seen in their similar art work and their distinct physiognomy with fair complexion.

Buddhism was not a foreign doctrine to Hamadānī. He not only attracted the Hindus and Buddhists of the regions he traveled and settled in, but interpreted some of the Buddhist and Vedantic spiritual concepts in his book of *Asrār al-Nuqta.* His introduction of *yoga* and *pranayam* (breathing exercises), which result in union with the hidden self, was a significant addition to his hybrid Sufism. He taught that long breathing exercises would bring the practitioner to an intellective, perceptive, and intermediate stage between the body and mind, and finally through these exercises the passage to further stages could lead to great discovery of an inner light.[109]

Hamadānī was not a typical Sufi but an innovative master who did not avoid restating Hindu-Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation in his own terminology. To him the goal of being reincarnated or repetitively returning to this world of appearances is to purify one's karma. A reincarnated life in which one performed noble and moral deeds would lead one to experience *heaven* on earth, and through this spiritual ascendency one would also experience what Hamadānī calls *qīyāmat* (resurrection), or allegorically, *awakening*.[110]

Like Simnānī, Hamadānī came from a generation and an environment in which Buddhism was a significant component. The impact of the vision shared by Buddhists and Sufis is in one way or another reflected in Hamadānī's attitude. That he attempted to mix and eventually unify Buddhism and Sufism is entirely conceivable. He mentions traveling not only to the Buddhist areas of Ladakh and Turkistan but also to the predominantly Buddhist island of Serendīp (Sri Lanka) to pay homage to the alleged *qadamgāh* (footprint) of Adam.[111] Since the footprint has also been perceived as a footprint of the Buddha, Hamadānī's pilgrimage to the footprint on a mountaintop on a distant island suggests that he might have wanted to set the tone for a possible marriage between Buddhism and Sufi Islam. He seems, at any rate, to have succeeded in attracting Buddhists as well as Hindus to his Sufi order.

The humanist and cosmopolitan attitude among certain Sufis of this era, including creative thinkers like Hamadānī, espoused ignoring geographical, cultural, and religious borders. The expansion of the Kubrawī order beyond Khurāsān, until the time when the Naqshbandī Sufi[112] ideas gradually penetrated the Central Asian regions and even India, has been attributed to the efforts of Hamadānī and his later disciples.[113] It does seem that the powerful Sufism dissolved the Hindu-Buddhist

culture of Kashmir and its periphery, but much of the Hindu-Buddhist elements were also absorbed into Sufism of the region. Despite the sectarian attribution to the Sufi order represented by Simnānī and Hamadānī, the Buddhist elements that they absorbed and adapted in Buddhist geographical regions including Iran, next to the eastern Buddhist territories, can neither be ignored nor be overlooked for the interfaith dialogue and comparative studies that the giant Sufis attempted to manifest.

Conclusion

Mongol and post-Mongol Sufism undisputedly came into direct contact with Buddhism. This encounter produced cultural, spiritual, and literary fruits in Iran. Sufi personalities such as Simnānī and Hamadānī promoted Buddhist-style spiritual exercises and techniques to dominate *nafs* (the ego), but using Sufi vocabulary. They reinterpreted Buddhist philosophy and spirituality by adopting some of its key features. Consequently, Simnānī and Hamadānī became, in anthropological terms, the agents of acculturation between Sufism and Buddhism. They had interacted with the Buddhist culture for such a long period of time in their lives that it was difficult to escape its appropriation.

During the Mongol era, the Sufis in Iran were in contact with their Central Asian counterparts and they also incorporated diverse ideas from Rumī (d.1273), Iraqī (d.1289), and Sadr al-Dīn Qunyawī (the disciple and stepson of Ibn ʿArabī), as well as from the Kubrawī and Qalandarī Sufi orders. The Mongol assault on the caliphate and Islam consequentially revealed Sufism as the only viable medium for saving Islam. It also gave the Sufis of the time freedom to appropriate new ideas. Sufism gained so much momentum that two Buddhist Il-Khans, Ghāzān and Ōljaitü, became Sufis, the latter even naming his three sons after the ninth-century Sufi master Bāyazīd Bastāmī.[114] Thus Islam in the post-Mongol era was reestablished on a Sufi foundation, particularly with the rise of the powerful Sufi orders of Kubrawī, Nurbakhsī, Naqshbandī, and Niʿmatu'llāhī.[115] A further consequence of the ʿAbbāsid downfall at the hands of the Mongols was to give the upper hand to the Shiʿi minority, for example, Sarbedārān of Sabzevār, who were to surface with much more power with the Safavids (1501–1722), almost 150 years after the fall of the Il-Khan Mongols.

The fall of the Il-Khan dynasty brought the end of state-endorsed Buddhism in Iran. Historically it is not clear where the Buddhist practitioners went during the confusing transitional period. They likely converted to Sufism or left for Central Asia and Tibet. The Buddhist strongholds in cities such as Marāgheh, Tabriz, and Sultānīya were lost. The Sufis became the spiritual buffer who absorbed Buddhist converts, adopted some of their practices, and upheld certain Buddhist ideals under the leadership of the key Sufis of the Mongol period, the pioneers Simnānī, and Hamadānī.

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Part 4

The Influences

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Chapter 8

Buddhism and Early Asceticism in Iran

The distinction between early asceticism and Sufism as briefly analyzed in this chapter serves two facets of understanding. First and most importantly, the culture of asceticism in eastern Iran (Khurāsān) was conceivably prompted and influenced by the preexisting ascetic Buddhist (as well as Manichaean) traditions based on its timing, geographical region, similarities, and circumstantial evidence. Second, it can be argued that the ascetic movement in eastern Iran had no connection with the type of Sufism being developed in Iraq in the first century after the advent of Islam, and that it is only in later centuries that they both merged. We will focus our attention on the eastern Iranian region, where the culture of asceticism had a close encounter with Buddhism. Here it is vital to distinguish the early asceticism in eastern Iran and parts of Khurāsān in the first three centuries after Islam from the later formation of Sufism in the same region and elsewhere.

The anachronistic merging and Islamization of eastern Iranian asceticism and Iraqi Sufism through the course of history took place on two levels: at one level was the literary work of hagiographers such as Sulamī (d. 1020), Qushayrī (d. 1072), Hujwīrī (d. 1077), and ʿAttār (d. ca. 1220). Sulamī in particular, whose works provided a conglomeration of biographies and practices of Iraqi and Khurāsāni ascetics and Sufis, was especially influential in making a case for a universal and Islamic Sufism.[1] The other level of fusion involved Sufi settlers physically arriving in Khurāsān from Iraq. The Sufi movement was not, as some believe, a unified and homogeneous movement in Iran, nor was it a universal movement.[2] This chapter will focus on the former level—the literary attempt to construct a Sufi identity by linking eastern Iranian practitioners of *zuhd* or asceticism in Khurāsān before the ninth and tenth centuries who would not have borne the title of "Sufi." Thus the anachronous application of the label "Sufi" was initiated by Sulamī, applying the term to the personalities of Khurāsān who were simply ascetics perhaps under Buddhist and even Manichaean influence.

With his powerful religious work on Sufism, Sulamī made any future investigation of extra-Islamic sources of influence on asceticism in Khurāsān, including

Buddhism, difficult if not impossible. Even before Sulamī, ʿAli al-Serrāj (d. 988) warned his intelligent readership about the huge differences in cultural environments between the Sufis brought up in Iraq and those ascetics in Khurāsān; even though they seem to resemble each other and dress similarly, they should not all be wrongly labeled Sufis.[3] Another forerunner, Kalābādhī (d. 944), had also portrayed the differences in the ascetic communities, especially among the practitioners of Khurāsān,[4] but Sulamī tried to disregard such divisions by showing Sufism as a universal conformist spiritual and mystical class within Islam.

As the Islamization and consequent absorption or rejection of all pre-Islamic cultural and religious elements accelerated, the Buddhist connection with this early asceticism became more and more remote, or at least overt references to it. The biographies of ascetic personalities were constructed and associated with the later Islamic tradition using supportive *hadīths* (prophetic sayings) and the prophetic culture of *zuhd* (abstinence or asceticism) to justify and explain their practices. In the avalanche of Islamic writings on Sufism that followed, it became more and more difficult to find the indigenous roots of and sources of influence on asceticism of Khurāsān. The Buddhism of Khurāsān became a distant memory as over the centuries, mystic and Sufi communities began to emerge in diverse regions, preaching, diverging, and justifying their existence through the iconic founders of their order without much reference to the more distant past. Wherever in the Islamic world a local group of mystics emerged, regardless of their sociocultural roots, they were automatically and yet often erroneously perceived to be yet another branch of Sufism, as if the word "Sufi" was the only available explanation for any mystical tendencies. The distortions deepened when groups with different sociocultural backgrounds in Khurāsān, Iraq, and Egypt were all regarded as Sufis. Religiously minded Sufi authors such as Sulamī and Qushayrī themselves also tended to manipulate or censor information about the natural cultural process of exchange that had taken place between the Muslims and the Buddhists in the first generation of the Islamic era in Khurāsān and northeastern Iran.

The rise of early asceticism in Balkh and Neishābur, including the ninth-century Malāmatī ascetics, should be considered and discussed in terms of their practices of *zuhd* in the early days of Islam when Buddhism was mutating and departing from those regions. Grouping these largely unique ascetics under the homogenous banner of the imported Sufism of Iraq should therefore be avoided, since the Khurāsān region with its rich cultural heritage continued to thrive even in the Islamic period by transferring the echoes of its Buddhist past to the Islamic period under the guise of Islamic spirituality.

Let us briefly consider the purging of Buddhist culture and the tension created by those in Khurāsān who challenged the dogmatic thinkers of Islam—an atmosphere that gave the Islamic conformist theologians and *hadīth* transmitters such as Sulamī power to deflect attention from the influences of Buddhism in eastern Iran.

The development of a series of yogic, tantric, and meditational practices in India and their consequent permeation among the ascetics in Khurāsān and Central Asia was one facet of the ascetic exchanges in that region. The other facet was the powerful presence of the Buddhist culture of *śramanā* (in Persian known as *shaman*),

or the Buddhist mendicants, which made an enormous impact on the culture of asceticism in the region.

Geographically, Khurāsān and its southern regions shared the Indian, Iranian, and the Sino-Turkish cultures. The drastic change from the tolerance and multiculturalism of Khurāsān to the consolidation and homogenization of Islamic communities came through political domination and dogmatism of its cultural elites—enough reason to Islamize all facets of life, including the practice of asceticism. The fervent political and religious atmosphere in Khurāsān and eastern Iran initiated in the ninth and tenth centuries by the rulers of the Saffārid and Ghaznavid dynasties and their two iconoclastic Islamic champions, Ya'qūb ibn Laith and Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, led to the eradication of the physical non-Islamic elements in their territories. The destruction and pillaging of the Hindu-Buddhist temples in Khurāsān and India and the persecution of non-Muslims by these two dynasties, as mentioned in chapter 2, would make the neighboring Sāmānids of Bukhārā seem most tolerant and progressive in the tenth century.

By the turn of the eleventh century, it is not certain if the Buddhist monastery of Nawbahār (*vihāra*) in Balkh, and other monasteries, were functioning.[5] Sultan Mahmud made several raids on Buddhist *vihāras* in Kabul, Hindu Kush, and other centers in the early eleventh century. India alone was invaded 17 times by the Ghaznavids between 1000 and 1025. Such raids against the Buddhists on the grounds, who according to the fanatic rulers espoused a so-called polytheistic (*mushrikūn*) and "idolatrous doctrine" continued until the twelfth century, when the Islamic occupation and sack of Nalanda, the main Buddhist center of learning in north India, made the possibility of any Buddhist survival in the region questionable.[6]

Mahmud, with his orthodox and dogmatic Islamization policy, went further when he ordered the burning of all nonconformist Islamic philosophical works of the rationalist Mu'tazili authors when he reached the city of Rayy.[7] Even as a great patron of literature, Mahmud often could not keep up the promises made to his men of letters and scholars, and that would have made not all of them always grateful for their services in his court.[8] During this period the famous epic poet Firdousī (d. 1020) was denied the right to be buried in a Muslim cemetery simply because he was seen to have praised the pre-Islamic Persian kings and heroes through his literary work *Shāhnāmeh*.[9] Immediately before Firdousī, the Zoroastrian poet Daqīqī (d. 980), who was once protected by the Sāmānids, allegedly fell victim to Mahmud's intolerant wrath for his open observance of the Zoroastrian religion.[10]

However, despite the ongoing military assaults and the removal of physical evidence of Buddhism, the spiritual and intellectual Buddhism did not immediately disappear. This survival of Buddhism was due to its enormous diversity, ranging from formal all the way to esoteric, particularly along the Silk Routes.[11] The question was how long the Buddhists could sustain themselves in the face of continuous existential assault. The cultural transformation of Khurāsān became a reality as Buddhism was gradually replaced by a new form of spirituality in the Islamic era, one that even in the face of fading Buddhist asceticism and monasticism maintained ties to past beliefs and practices.

While Hindus and Buddhists were being persecuted by fanatical rulers, an influential figure of Khurāsān who fearlessly stood against their frightful dogma was Abu Rayhān Birunī (d. 1048). The valuable and trustworthy observations and anthropologically sound accounts of this great scientist and "Indologue" are even more impressive, considering he spent 13 years of his life at the court of Sultan Mahmud. However, on the issue of "idol worshipping" attributed to the Hindu-Buddhist population, Birunī explained that the higher order of Brahmanism, and for that matter Buddhism as well, does not encourage idol or image worshipping, and that the Muslim perception of Hindus as well as Buddhists as idol-worshippers is false. Despite such clarifications, the stereotyping of and prejudice against all the non-Muslim religious communities continued to predominate in the Islamic world. Birunī tried to study Buddhism and attempted to educate his dogmatic fellow Muslims, but he admits that he did not succeed in this mission. Birunī did not know enough about the Buddhist world, and referred his readership to the ninth-century book of Abul 'Abbās Irānshahrī (now lost) for more details.[12]

Birunī, however, transmitted his nonjudgmental attitude toward Indian religions to his pupil and personal acquaintance, Gardīzī, who also produced a nonpolemical work, though somewhat less original than that of Birunī.[13] In his *Zayn al-Akhbār,* Gardīzī speaks about Buddhist empiricism and the Buddhists' rejection of the need for prophecy as well as the replacement of karmic reincarnation for heaven and hell.[14] Other medieval Islamic encyclopedic authors who also dealt with the Indian religions with references to Buddhism in their works included Marvazī, Maqdisī (d. 946), and Ibn Nadīm (d. 998), as well as Shahrastānī (d. 1153), whose work is a compilation and culmination of many lost works on Brahmanism and Buddhism.[15] However Gardīzī and Marvazī, among others, wrote their works on Indian religions in Persian.[16]

The tension between the destructive and constructive forces in Khurāsān in search of a cultural equilibrium continued. In the face of Arab-Muslim domination in Khurāsān and the imposition of heavy-handed Islamic dogma, the literary and intellectual figures emerged to counter it by introducing the wisdom and legends of pre-Islamic times, not only from the Iranian world but also from the Indian world.

Nevertheless the military campaigns of the Saffārid and Ghaznavid rulers paved the way for the Turkish Seljūq dynasty of the eleventh through twelfth centuries to proceed with further Islamization of the regions. Frye mentions that the Seljāq dynasty had begun the persecution of many Buddhist mendicants in Khurāsān,[17] Manichaeans, and Christians, and thus had sent them underground.[18] Due to the fear of being persecuted, many nonconformist thinkers and ascetics within the newly established Islamic society had to assimilate Islamic ideas and remain in disguise. Furthermore, instead of complete rejection, the new proponents of Islamic culture saw it more beneficial to adopt the ascetic, literary, theological, and scientific methods of other traditions, including Buddhism, within the permissible context of Islamic doctrine. Thus eastern Iran became the major zone for many of the cultural and intellectual developments in the first several centuries of Islamic rule.

The Impact of Buddhism in Eastern Iran

From an anthropological point of view, during the tumultuous transition from the 1,000-year-old Buddhist culture of Khurāsān, the meeting of Buddhism and Islam could not have happened without stimulating a cultural change. Naturally the rate of the cultural change depended on the frequency of contact between the two groups, their tolerance and power relations, and the demographic patterns of the region. In addition to Buddhism's impact on other cultural areas, the scholastic and ascetic influences of Buddhism on Islamic refinement can be assumed to be strong. Certain Buddhist scholastic approaches were seemingly imitated by the Muslim scholars.

Since the Prophet of Islam or his close companions did not write down his teachings and sayings (*hadith*), making a collection of these sayings started to become an enterprise in eastern Iran and the Central Asian region almost 250 years after the Prophet's death. To prevent the *hadīth* fabrications from being carried out by various political authorities and sectarian parties for religious and political gain,[19] it was important to systematize the teachings of the founder of the religion. Thus the *hadīth* collection entitled *Sahīh* (authentic)[20] consolidated by the eastern Iranian ninth-century Mohammad ibn Isa Tirmīdhī was followed by the celebrated al-Bukhārī (d. 870), from Bukhārā, and his counterpart al-Muslim (d. 875), from Neishābūr. The *hadīth* collectors turned some of the *hadīth* collections in the direction toward gaining a Sufi disposition, a point of departure to link Sunni Islam with Sufism. However, some rejected the authority of some reported *hadīths*[21] and others criticized the enterprise.[22] There were of course those who were not well-versed in the discipline of *hadīth* or the knowledge of religion, and historians used these reported *hadīths* as a means to achieving their end without questioning the validity of such sayings. But to disqualify all noncompliant or un-Islamic elements vis-à-vis Islam, the *hadīth* collection movement can be assumed to have been inspired by the Buddhist model of the *sutras* (Buddhist anecdotes taught by the Buddha). The Buddhists had learned through their own historical experience that the teaching of their doctrine could only be sustained by writing down the teachings of the founder (e.g. *Dhamapada*—sayings of the Buddha).

Islam at its start had no theology; it had to be created, and eastern Iran was where the contribution was enormous. Though the Buddhist impact on the Mu'tazili and the speculative theological thinking is controversial, one man associated with Mu'tazili stands out for his frequent contacts with the Buddhists of the area. Originating from Tirmīdh, Jahm b. Safwān (d. 746) [23] became the epitome of rationalism or *dahrī* (materialism) and was thus subject to serious criticism and confrontation by the conformist Islamic thinkers. One cannot help but suspect that Jahm's frequent contact with Buddhists had an effect on his theological approach. His later followers, the Jahmīyya School, were primarily non-Arab scholars[24] who would ally themselves with the Persians and Turks against other Muslims.[25] To the Jahmīyya, the concept of *faith* was the knowledge of the heart (and mind), which reduced the need for external acts of religion and made the verbal denial of God seem permissible, which along with a series of other teachings was labeled as *kufr* (disbelief) by the conservative Ash'ari theologians.[26] The Jahmīyya argued that the Koran was not eternal and that God did not speak to Moses; they also rejected

all anthropomorphic attributes given to God and did not believe in punishment between death and resurrection.[27]

Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), the founder of the Sunni Hanbali School, and other critics later argued that Buddhist logic and the art of disputation had infiltrated the doctrine of *kalām* or speculative theology, and that Jahm, because of his regular contacts with the Buddhist monks, was chiefly responsible for this.[28] Themes in *kalām* theology such as *tanāsukh* (transmigration of the soul), views on the validity of *dalīl* or *istidlāl* (reason and inference) or intellectual analysis aside from the five senses to address the existence of God, and Jahm's interpretation of the Koran[29] echoed Buddhism as well as Manichaeism, with ideas that were in disguise, being also promoted by the Ghullāt Shi'i of Iraq.[30] The alleged exchanges of Jahm with his Buddhist counterparts could account for the infiltration of secular and dialectical concepts into Islamic *kalām* and theology. Predictably, Jahm was executed for his rational and materialist position, a heretical position that confronted the conformist's views of God, revelation, and the Koran.[31]

Thus the eastern Iranian region's vast intellectual heritage took the upper hand in shaping Islamic scholasticism and speculative or *kalām* discourse following the established Buddhist traditions. [32]

Eastern Iran had become a focal point for the formation of other streams of religion and spirituality. One such stream was the ascetic movement of the eighth and ninth centuries, particularly in Balkh and Neishābur.

Ascetic practices in eastern Iranian regions were not invented by one group but evolved from pre-Buddhism, to Buddhism, all the way to altered forms of asceticism before and after Islam. Even though Zoroaster is perceived to be a mystic or a shāman[33] himself and believed that certain aspects of humans are divine, the followers of Zoroastrianism did not have as much impact on the development of Islamic esoteric and mystical culture in Iran.[34] In the Islamic period the practice of *zuhd* and *rīyāḍa* (austere mental and bodily restraint) had to gradually separate from other forms of asceticism and from the original Buddhist (and even Manichaean) culture in order to adjust to new historical and cultural circumstances. A shift occurred across barriers in Khurāsān, from the concept of *nīrvanic* knowledge to the Islamic knowledge of self, *'ilm bātin* (awareness of a veiled state, or science of the mind). Such a shift was natural and possible due to the similarities of the two concepts, giving the practice of *zuhd* an origin and continuity. The ultimate goal remained the same, although the cultural footsteps changed.

To argue and distinguish between the asceticism of eastern Iran and the Sufism of Iraq it is important to shed light on a few concepts. The word *Sufi* (Islamic mystic) was less evident than *zuhd* in the Persianized areas of Khurāsān in the early seventh and eighth centuries. However, it is only after the tenth century that the imported term *Sufi* gained widespread attention in Khurāsān.[35] The term *Sufism*, as it appears in the earliest writings of Sufis and chroniclers such as Sulamī, Qushayrī, Hujwīrī, and later 'Attār, is a concept imported from Iraq whose religious content had been worked out by its masters in Iraq. The aforementioned Sufi chroniclers, after the eleventh century, anachronistically characterized the prominent early ascetic individuals of Khurāsān, such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, Shaqīq Balkhī, and Bāyazīd, as Sufis.[36] The ninth-century Neishābur-born Malāmatī ascetics never used the term

Sufi and in fact distanced themselves from the Sufis and from Muslim ritualism. Similar to the Malāmatīs were the Central Asian Uighur/Turkish wandering dervishes, who had been inspired by the Buddhists in the ninth century. These post-Islamic dervishes dispersed across Khurāsān and later developed monasteries and observance of abstinence, breathing techniques, *zikr* (litany of prayers), and the use of a rosary and other rituals.[37] The eighth—through tenth—century campaign to Islamize Central Asian Turks, who were for the large part Buddhist, also paved the way for the rise of several powerful dervish orders.[38] However, these very same ascetic practitioners would ultimately and erroneously, for the lack of a better term, be labeled as Sufis.

Zuhd has not been treated in the broader sense of the intention of its practitioners, and thus has mostly remained associated with its limited definition within Sufism. The practitioners of *zuhd*, what they abstained from, and for what purpose have not yet been fully explained.[39] When supporting *hadīths* appeared to justify and Islamize *zuhd* in the seminal works of hagiographers, confusion over the intention and meaning of *zuhd* blurred a deeper knowledge of the ascetic culture in Khurāsān. By ascribing all the practices of *zuhd* to the Prophet and his companions, the Sufi traditionalists and theologians brought *zuhd* into widespread general usage by ordinary pious Muslims as well as by the Sufis. The Sufis and theologians maintained their understanding and interpretation of *zuhd* within the context of monotheism and Islamic tradition. According to one Muslim theologian, *zuhd* meant following the *hadīth* and *sunnah,* or the prophetic tradition.[40] This Islamic definition of the practice of *zuhd* represents a later development in the conception of the practice, because the written evidence of the time provides clues that *zuhd* in eastern Iran had no coherent connection with scholastic theology or the Sufism of the ninth century.[41] Even the famous Sufi Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910) distinguished between the eastern practitioners of *zuhd* and Sufis of his time.[42]

The first use of the term *Sufi* was in the early part of the ninth century, according to Qushayrī, and it was applied to Abu Hāshim of Kufa (Iraq).[43] Elsewhere it is said that the epithet was first used in the latter part of the ninth century to designate an Iraqi, Abū Bakr al-Wāsitī, who had come from Iraq to settle in Neishābur and in Marv, where he died in 930.[44] After al-Wāsitī, other Sufis of Iraq and Syria followed his footsteps by migrating to Khurāsān and creating communities there, thus paving the road for the hagiographers to concoct the fusion between the Sufis of the west and the *zuhd* practitioners, namely, the Malāmatīs of the east.[45] The Sufism of the west was alien in eastern Iran until the ninth century.

Sulamī's "Suficization" of Asceticism in Eastern Iran

The first man responsible for attaching and incorporating all forms of previous practices of *zuhd,* including that of the Malāmatī sect, with Sufism was of the Arab tribe, from Neishābur, 'Abdul Rahmān Sulamī (d. 1021). He had been preoccupied with *hadīth* transmission, and had been traveling to Iraq and other Islamic lands for 40 years. He interpreted the Koran from a Sufi point of view (*Haqāyiqt al-Tafsīr*), attempting to bring Sufism and Islamic thinking closer together. Sulamī's unprecedented strategy was to construct a biographical and descriptive work for the early

ascetics of Khurāsān giving each one of them the label of "Sufi," which was completely anachronistic and unjustified. He would also align their lives with supporting *hadīths* and/or some verses out of the Koran, turning them into Islamic holy figures, a tactic that compelled a few reputable personalities of the time to accuse Sulamī of *hadīth* fabrication.[46] Sulamī was not the only one accused of this; the pioneering mystic of Iraq, the eighth-century Hasan al-Basrī, was also accused of *hadīth* fabrication, but the *'ulamā* (Islamic jurists) of Basrī's time seems to have had a vested interest in this *hadīth* fabrication and thus refrained from criticizing it.[47] Sulamī's manipulation and incorporation of various spiritual endeavors with Sufism was intended to erase the traces of any extra-Islamic influences on the development of the eastern Iranian asceticism by linking it to the Iraqi Sufism. The "Suficization" of earlier asceticism and non-Sufi ascetics was also imitated and carried on by Sulamī's student Qushayrī[48] and future hagiographers.

The "Suficization" of the ascetic culture of eastern Iran paralleled the Islamization of the eleventh-century political culture of the Seljūqs, who accessed power after the iconoclastic Ghaznavid dynasty sponsored and supported the Sunni *hadīth* scholars and centers of scholastic learning (in *Nizāmiyya* colleges).[49] Islamization of the regions gained momentum by the sponsorship of scholastic studies in Islamic colleges, the *Nizāmiyya,* established and named after the Seljūq vizier from eastern Iran, Nizām ul-Mulk (d. 1092). Sulamī's recording of the ascetic anecdotes, practices, and intentions within a prophetic context changed the imagination and ideals of the later religiously oriented Sufis, and they modeled their activities not only after the early ascetic figures but also after the Prophet and other revered figures of Islam. The early asceticism of Balkh, Neishābur, and other vicinities could only be presented with the supporting work of *hadīth* by Sufi architects such as Sulamī.

Sulamī's sources of *hadīths*, as Afifi indicates, cannot be verified,[50] although the transmission of certain accounts went back several generations.[51] In his *Kitab al-Futuwwa*, Sulamī quotes *hadīth*s from various transmitters such as al-Bukhārī and al-Muslim, Junayd, and even Shi'i Imams, including sayings from ascetic personalities such as Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, Bāyazīd, and Dhul Nūn al-Misrī[52]—all aimed at blending Egyptian and Iraqi Sufis, Khurāsānian ascetics, the Prophet of Islam, and Shi'i Imams.

In his construction of Sufi culture and customs, Sulamī had tuned into the religious fervor of the time. He inserted into the core of his Sufi works the life of the Prophet of Islam, and the Prophet's virtues, lifestyle, and manners in order to compare the early ascetics with the Prophet and demonstrate the common culture and practices between prophetic tradition and Sufism. Sulamī invites people to follow the Prophet and the Koran by making the Prophet the central role model for the practice of asceticism and Sufism.[53] By adding the Prophet to the circles of the ascetics and Sufis, Sulamī intended to remove the suspicion of the masses and make Sufism and its parallels more acceptable to a larger body of Muslims who could no longer oppose it as something originating outside of Islam.[54] Thus Sulamī carried out the synthesis and Islamization of the asceticism of eastern Iran and Sufism of Iraq.[55] He succeeded in persuading many that Sufism was the direct progeny of Islam by lumping together the heterogeneous groups of ascetics and mystics.[56]

Sulamī transformed the early ascetics into incredibly pious Sufi Muslims and even into scholars, as we witness in his treatment of Bāyazīd.[57]

Sulamī nonetheless delicately made a case for a close relationship between the Malāmatī ascetic order and Sufis by saying that certain ascetics of Khurāsān from Malāmatī and other sects (unnamed by Sulamī) had arduously traveled to Iraq and Syria in order to exchange ideas with their Sufi brothers.[58] Sulamī mentioned one such spiritual journey, that of Ibrāhim b. Adham, who came from Balkh and allegedly traveled to the Hijāz, Iraq, and Syria where he settled and died. Sulamī tried to depict a typical Khurāsānian ascetic of the eighth century, namely, Ibrāhim b. Adham, as a true compassionate Sufi. This tactical move of Sulamī was to deflect attention. It was originally the Malāmatīs who had idealized Ibrāhīm b. Adham, a prince who became a poor ascetic as an example of purity, was humiliated, and barred from entry even to public places because of his ragged appearance.[59] The Malāmatīs' choice of Ibrāhīm b. Adham as a role model and iconic figure was not a detached scenario from the Buddhism of the time, particularly when Ibrāhīm's life was undeniably a parallel portrayal of Buddha's legend, a prince who had become an ascetic mendicant. The Buddhist allegory used for Ibrāhim's life story was reflected in many Islamic hagiographical works; however, this significant coincidence and link between Buddha's life and Ibrāhim was never explained to the Muslim audience, who instead came to know Ibrāhim only as an Islamic Sufi. The Malāmatīs also introduced the ninth-century Bāyazīd as a model of simplicity, almost as if he were a Malāmatī master.

The non-Sufi Malāmatīs' unpretentious practice of *zuhd* and spiritual modesty was meant to embarrass "hypocritical" Sufis. The Malāmatīs were sometimes called *majūsī* (Zoroastrian) for want of a better label.[60] The term *malāmatiyya* (*malāma* in Arabic and *malāmat* in Persian means "blame") was apparently chosen by the founders of the group, Hamdoun Qassār and Abu Hafs Haddād, in order to represent the rejection of the body and the principle of allowing the body to suffer so that the soul would rejoice. It also represented targeting the ego[61] as the source of hypocrisy and self-regard.

If we take Buddhism as the source of inspiration for the early asceticism in a previously Buddhist Balkh, beginning with Ibrāhim and later transferring to Neishābur, then the significance of the Malāmatīs in Neishābur by the ninth century becomes clearer. Not only did the Malāmatīs continue the earlier ascetic culture of Balkh, with its Buddhist groundwork, but Neishābur's own culture and Buddhist population may also have been a source of influence. As for Neishābur's population, Bulliet asserts that before the large-scale conversion to Islam, there were still Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews, and possibly even Buddhists living in the city.[62] The Malāmatīs' final fate was a literary takeover by Sulamī, with his "Suficization" as well as Islamization of their practices. It was easy for Sulamī to arbitrarily lump together Malāmatīs with Sufis because Malāmatīs were people without written material and perhaps even without any particular definition, other than a strong stance against hypocrisy and with high social ethics.[63] Tactically, Sulamī considered himself to be both a Malāmatī and a Sufi.[64] Through this takeover of the primordial asceticism of eastern Iran, we can then recognize how some of the Buddhist practices were embellished as Islamic: meditation, subduing *nafs* (the ego), living in utter modesty, and

removing worldly greed, to name but a few. Some disagreed with Sulamī's attempt to fuse the Sufis and Malāmatīs together, including Sulamī's contemporary, Abū Sa'd al-Khargūshī (d. 1016).[65]

The Malāmatīs throughout their existence were perceived in many ways, but the fact remained that they were not associated with Sufism. The adherents of the Malāmatī sect from the ninth century onward spread in many regions under the Islamic rule. But in their final stages some say the Malāmatīs fell into moral decay, creating misunderstanding and the grounds for many of their enemies to judge and discard them by ignoring their noble start and instead focusing on their decadent end.[66] Another view is that there was no end to the Malāmatī movement, but rather that they transformed, possibly emerging as the Qalandarī and Khāksarī dervishes.[67] The Malāmatīs' influences however seem to have had a wider spectrum than some have imagined, as they influenced another Central Asian post-Mongol Sufi group of Khāwjagān as well.[68] Their opposition to conventional Sufism, at least the kind of Sufism that Sulamī preached, earned Malāmatīs a reputation as the most enigmatic ascetic sect, and questions about their origin remained unanswered.

All the practices and concepts such as *morāqaba* (meditation), practice of *zikr* and maintaining the state of *faqr* (austere living), and *hūrrīya* (spiritual liberation) sounded familiar and were echoing the Buddhism of the period, which Sulamī and Qushayrī cleverly tried to keep out of their writings. Despite the avalanche of *hadīth*s and Koranic verses that Sulamī and Qushayrī employed to try to Islamize the origin of early asceticism, the correspondence between the practices and concepts of those early ascetics and those originating from the Buddhism of Khurāsān cannot be ignored. Parallel spiritual practices and asceticism that Sulamī and Qushayrī considered to be Islamic were still prevalent among Buddhists in pockets of Khurāsān and its periphery until as late as the tenth century. Qushayrī referred to all the non-Islamic ascetics as corrupt because they do not follow *sharī'a*[69] (Islamic law), writing: "From the outside they seem to share the same tent but under it they are not of the same *nisā'* (tribe)."[70] He presumably included the Malāmatīs and other scattered Buddhist-inspired ascetics among those who did not follow Islam, which included another ascetic group known as the Karrāmī, who were contemporaries of the Malāmatīs in Neishābur.

Thus the Islamic identity of all spiritual movements was assured by Sulamī and Qushayrī's Sufi propaganda on a literary level, whereas on the ground the continuous challenges to the Islamic tenets could not be sustained. The erasure of Buddhism in ascetic and Sufi literature makes it curious as to how much actually Buddhism was present in the development of asceticism in eastern Iran and Khurāsān, which continued to have an impact on the practices of later establishments of Sufism in Iran.

The Buddhist and Sufi Parallel Practices and Concepts

Our goal in this section is to bring to light the practices that are common between Buddhism and asceticism as well as general Sufism and their progenies in Iran and beyond. (For practical purposes, from this point forward the term *Sufism* will be interchangeably used along with "asceticism.") It is of course impossible to marshal an argument on the evolution of Sufism, with its spread throughout all the regions

of the Islamic empire including Central Asia, India, Southeast Asia, Iran, Iraq, the Near East, North Africa, and Islamic Spain without considering the complex and diverse contributions of the host lands, all of which require extensive research. Just as there have been assertions by certain authors that, geographically, Arab Sufism has been different from Persian Sufism, determined by historical events, movements, religious ideologies, and personalities,[71] the same assertion can be made across the Islamic world with the multitude of Sufi practices and beliefs in different historical periods. There is no universal and absolute definition of Sufism for all lands and all periods of history, and the influences on Sufi practices as they developed and spread were wide and varied. However, the existence of parallel practices between Buddhist and Sufi traditions was a result of Buddhist concepts and practices trickling down into Islamic asceticism in eastern Iran, with such practices (i.e., the use of the rosary) gradually gaining credence in Islam and the general Sufi culture.

The notion of the influence of Buddhism on Sufism and similarities between them is not new in Western scholarship. The debate has been ongoing for decades, but has not been fully treated nor the resolution agreed upon. In the nineteenth century, A. von Kramer and R. Dozy referred to similarities between Buddhism and Sufism. So did E. G. Browne[72] and R. Nicholson[73] in the early twentieth century, but their remarks were hesitant and they did not pursue consistent arguments. The hypothesis that Sufism grew out of the Indian philosophy of Vedanta was also put forward by von Kramer and Dozy as well as by Max Horten.[74] Another early approach also came from I. Goldziher, who presented an article in Budapest in 1903 on the influences of Buddhism on Islam, mainly focusing on the similarities between Buddhism and Sufism.[75] Nicholson, on the other hand, believed that the assertion about the "influence of Buddhism on Mohammedan thought has been exaggerated."[76] In Iran in the 1960s, S. Nafīcy dedicated a book to tracing the multifactorial roots of Sufism, among which Buddhism was given strong consideration.[77] After a brief mention by von Kramer, the influence of Vedantic pantheism on Sufism was strongly argued by M. Moreno in the 1940s,[78] followed by R. C. Zaehner in 1960.[79]

It is true that the practices of ascetic groups such as Jain, Manichaean, and Śiva devotee sadhus were also known in Khurāsān and Central Asia. Their influences on the development of Islamic asceticism in the region, particularly with the transmission and dissemination of Indian yogic texts in Sufi circles in later stages, should not be underestimated.[80] Nor should the mixing of the Indian and Muslim fakirs and the popularity of Indian-influenced rational Islamic philosophy in South Asia be ignored.[81] The Indian Samkara (or Shankara) notion of self-knowledge (*atma*) as the cause of liberation and understanding the highest Truth (Vedantic Brahman) has a strong correlation with the Sufi notion of unveiling the Truth in which the world seems only an illusion. As much as these non-Buddhist doctrines are legitimate topics of research, they are not, however, within the scope of this study, and the influences they exerted on Islamic Sufism and mysticism may not be considered here.

In the wake of the Islamic conquest and partisan politics, the Buddhists of Khurāsān and eastern Iran went through phases of readjustment, with spontaneous and informal mystical integration with the Muslim communities around them.[82] It is true that many ascetic and mystical schools in Indian and Christian traditions share certain

similarities, and thus the similarities between Sufism and Buddhism can be viewed as coincidental and circumstantial. But the specific similarities between Buddhism and Islamic asceticism or Sufism are geographically bound as well as being linked by the correlated timing of transition from the Buddhist culture to an Islamic one.

The evidence is quite strong, however, that Buddhism and general Sufism do in fact have strikingly similar concepts and practices due to the processes of acculturation in eastern Iran and Khurāsān as has been discussed. In the previous section of this chapter, we provided historical and geographical grounds to demonstrate the transition of Buddhism in newly conquered Islamic Khurāsān. The first century of Muslim presence in Khurāsān was when assimilation and cultural imitation were in high gear, and from the fusion of the parent cultures of Buddhism and Islam, the daughter culture of asceticism, which was later integrated into Sufism, was born. The evidence is such that one can ponder on the idea that "Sufism is Buddhism modified by Islam."[83]

The nondogmatic malleability of Buddhism allowed it to bend to the new cultural and religious circumstances, enough to maintain the same practices under a different banner. There has been a remarkably inclusive attitude among the Mahāyāna Buddhists, which can be summarized in one of the *sutras*: "Buddhism is not Buddhism" and all other teachings should be included in Buddhism.[84] Likewise, the Buddha's last counsel to his disciples was to relinquish even the attachment to his system of teachings and practices when the time came to adjust it.[85] This spiritual fusion was possible because both the Muslims and the Buddhists made adjustments and created a middle ground for the transition from Buddhism to the Islamic asceticism. Even as time went by, the commonality of Sufi practices with Buddhist ones remained astonishingly obvious, but for centuries the cross-influences between them went unmentioned and unscrutinized by the premodern Muslim scholars in general.

References in Chinese Zen, Indian,[86] and Islamic historical works such as those by 'Attār (d. ca. 1220) reveal the familiarity and interactions between the Sufis and the followers of the Buddha. For example, 'Attār gives us a remarkable account of an ascetic personality from Balkh who is believed to be the disciple of Ibrāhīm b. Adham, the notable Abu 'Ali Shaqīq Balkhī (d. 810). The encounters of Shaqīq with the Buddhist communities (*bot-parast*—idol worshipper) of Turkistan, which during his time were predominantly Buddhist, is of special interest here. Shaqīq, on his spiritual quest, visited Buddhist monasteries in Turkistan, where he once asked a Buddhist monk, "Why don't you worship God instead of idols?" According to 'Attār, the Buddhist replied, "If your God is capable of satisfying your spiritual quest, why have you come here to us to search?" Upon hearing this, Shaqīq is said to have been spiritually shaken and led to contemplate.[87] The monk's question of why Shaqīq had gone to Turkistan and spent time in Buddhist monasteries is a curious matter on which 'Attār did not elaborate, and thus our ideas must remain speculative. But the fact that the dialogue with the monk became an awakening point in Shaqīq's life shows the significant impact that Buddhism exerted on him and possibly on a generation of wandering ascetics of Balkh and the eastern Iranian region. The reason why Shaqīq spent time in Turkistan with the Buddhists was certainly underreported by 'Attār as well as by his predecessor hagiographers in an attempt to keep the Buddhist notion of inner awakening out of Sufism as much as possible.

In order to better understand the earliest Buddhist connections with asceticism in the new Islamic era, it is necessary to highlight the legend of eighth-century Ibrāhīm b. Adham, the first ascetic in the shifting city of Balkh from Buddhism to Islam. Among his hagiographers, ʿAttār in particular reconstructs Ibrāhīm b. Adham's life, describing a Sufi whose life and spiritual experiences actually matched those of the Buddha or a bodhisattva, effectively creating a Buddha in Muslim garb, "The Buddha of Sufism." And thus Buddhism was not only the source of the story of his life, but served as the launching pad of asceticism in Balkh in the eighth century that spread to Neishābur and elsewhere in the ninth century.

ʿAttār chronicled how Ibrāhīm, having abandoned his princely life, his wife, and newly born son, discreetly departed from Balkh, retreating to caves near Neishābur to meditate and search for an answer to human bewilderment and find the path to enlightenment.[88] He became one of the early "cave dwellers," *shikaftiyya*, of Islam in eastern Iran.[89] Hujwīrī and Qushayrī, both of the eleventh century, also claimed that Ibrāhīm was the disciple of and trained by the fictional prophet Khidr.[90] The affiliation of Khidr and Ibrāhīm could easily have been inspired by the story of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef*. In the Buddhist legend of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef*, it is reported that the Buddha was trained by an ascetic called Bilawahr.

As ʿAttār reports, when Ibrāhīm was already enlightened, the son came as a grown man to meet the father. This part of the story continues to show alignment with the story of the Buddha, who left his wife and infant son, Rahula, behind and years later met them again. Ibrāhīm's meeting with his son after having attained enlightenment was exactly like the Buddha's meeting with his son.[91] Moreover, Ibrāhīm in a critical spiritual crisis encountered the devil (*Iblīs*), who continuously tempted him, much like the psychological situation of the Buddha confronting the *māra* (lord of illusion and desire) who tempted him on the night of his *nīrvāna*. *Iblīs* in the Islamic and Sufi understanding is not a personification of the devil, but is instead related to the human lower soul, the *nafs* (desire, envy, or excessive greed). *Iblīs* asks Ibrāhīm, "Why did you leave your glorious kingdom and set out hungry to Mecca? One can also go to Mecca with wealth." Ibrāhīm said, "O God, do you put the enemy before your friend so that he may fail? I can abort this journey in the desert if you wish." Ibrāhīm continues, "*Iblīs* left me and a power from the hidden world appeared in me. It became clear that the *Iblīs* only troubles those who are attached to this world."[92] In ʿAttār's chronicle, when *Iblīs* was defeated, the gate to Ibrāhīm's liberation and enlightenment was opened.

No tomb or mausoleum for Ibrāhīm is known, which is rather uncharacteristic in the Islamic tradition, especially for someone who was well known and had many disciples. The Buddha also has no specific place of burial. ʿAttār is not sure what happened to Ibrāhīm at the end, whether he ended up in Baghdad or Syria.[93] Was Ibrāhīm merely a fictitious personality filling in for the story of the historical Buddha in order to test the opinion of the Islamic religious authorities? Could this be a symbolic fusion?

This process of adapting the Buddha legend in order to transmit the stories of other hybrid Islamic Sufis or holy figures has been documented in association with other Buddhist cultures' interactions with Islam. Javanese documents from the late fifteenth—and early sixteenth—century, when Muslims conquered the island,

reveal that the cult and story of Bhima, identified as the Buddha or a bodhisattva in Java, underwent modification into an Islamic guise in which the content of the story remained the same, but the cosmetic details changed. Bhima became an Islamic Sufi traveling by sea toward Mecca. On the way he meets Khidr, the popular mystical guide who often met Sufis on their path. Khidr tells Bhima that the worship of the physical place of Mecca is sheer idolatry, and the true Mecca is to be found in one's heart. The Mecca that lies westward is false, since there lies only stone.[94]

Adapting the Buddha narrative to the Islamic tastes seems to be the case for Ibrāhīm and similar personalities, who were Buddhists dressed in Sufi garb. This is a major similarity between the two traditions subtly laid in the realm of Islamic hagiography. Other similarities and borrowings are in the practices and concepts.

Let us begin our comparison with the more obvious nonconceptual practices. Owing to the dislike of monasticism in Islamic societies, the early ascetics, unlike Buddhist monks, maintained a nonmonastic, noninstitutionalized life. Later Sufis created a non-mosque-based fraternity center similar to a monastery for like-minded members. By creating a fraternity, or a place of gathering, called *khānaqāh* (Persian *khāne-gāh* may even be of Manichaean origin),[95] the Sufis maintained a practice similar to the Buddhist *sangha* (community).[96] It is highly probable that originally the idea of the Buddhist *sangha* influenced the Manichaean *mānistān* (fraternity and monastery) from which the Sufi *khānaqāh* emerged.

The Buddhists practiced repetitive *mantras* (prayers) on the greatness of the *Buddha*, the *Dharma* (the teaching, path), and the *Sangha* (community) by moving and counting the beads of the rosary.[97] In the same fashion, the Sufis chanted their repetitive *zikr* while rolling the rosary in their hands. Interestingly, at first, the use of a rosary by the Sufis was condemned by doctrinaire Islamic theologians, who most likely suspected its foreign origin. Finally, Jalāl al-Din Sūyūtī (d. 1505), an Egyptian encyclopedia writer, wrote an apology in defense of the use of the rosary.[98] The Buddhist rosary has 108 beads, in reference to the 108 human temptations. In Indian tradition the number 108 is sacred: 108 Upanishads and 108 bhakti prayers.[99] The Sufi (and generally the Muslim) rosary contained 99 beads, in reference to the 99 names of God.

The vital Buddhist practice of *morāqaba* (meditation) was adopted and practiced by the Sufis. Not only is there a great deal of discussion by Sufi writers throughout the ages about the importance of meditation, but there are also a large number of Sufi poetic verses dealing with *morāqaba*,[100] which in Arabic and Persian means meditation or coming closer to oneself. The Sufis, in varying degrees from sect to sect, designated the cave-like basement of a house or mosque, on a hill or a place in the wilderness, for fasting and meditation. There was a specific place designated for austere meditation called *cheleh khane,* meaning a "house of forty," referring to 40 days of seclusion and meditation as a means of reaching the deepest level of one's strength and spirituality. The similar strenuous exercise of fasting and meditation by Buddhists is called *vipassanā*, a practice that up to the seventh century brought many zealous pilgrims to Balkh while it was still a very important Buddhist center.

Another common practice among the Sufis has been breathing practices involving manipulating or holding the breath, called *habs-i nafas*, aimed at balancing the body's energy and consciousness. This probably originated as an imitation of yogic

Hindu-Buddhist *pranayam* practice designed with the same purpose.[101] The combination of yoga, posture, mantra, and breathing technique as part of the Tantric system was aimed to bring a cosmic or divine energy into the mundane body for the purpose of higher realization. In fact, breathing practices became one of the principal activities of the fourteenth-century Naqshbandī Sufi order of Central Asia.[102] Such Sufi practices could hardly be convincingly attributed to the Prophet or Islam in general.

Certain Sufi sects even shaved their heads and observed vegetarianism, as observed in Buddhism.[103] However, there is not enough solid evidence that the Buddha was a vegetarian,[104] and for this reason some Buddhists were not vegetarians. The practice of shaving the head and facial hair, which was a common practice among Buddhists and Buddhist monks, was also practiced by a number of nonconformist Iranian Sufi sects such as Qalandarī and Jalālī.[105] This shocked the Muslim communities.[106] Wearing a beard had always been in accordance with the prophetic tradition among the Muslim holy men and Sufis. The Qalandarīs, however, considered beards ceremonial and therefore dispensable, since they rejected Islamic traditions as spiritually redundant and stagnant.[107] Rumī (d. 1273), the Sufi poet from Balkh, is said to have shaved his beard, but left just enough so that the difference between the face of a man and woman was evident.[108] He also deftly composed a sarcastic verse directed against pious people preoccupied with their beards as compared to people without them (the Qalandarī), who were less distracted from attaining wisdom:

> While the Sufi was busy combing his beard,
> The dervish had already reached the Truth.[109]

The Qalandarīs sometimes appeared half-naked in public, wearing only wrapped robes. This was certainly perceived to be foreign in Islam. Bābā Tāhir Uryān, the eleventh-century poet from Hamadān who is believed to be a Qalandar, appeared not to be properly clothed and therefore acquired the nickname of Uryān (nude).[110] Going to even greater extremes, apparently in imitation of some Indian fakirs (more likely of the Śiva devotees), Qalandarīs ended up smoking hashish, even wearing the skins of tigers, leopards, and lions[111] and committing other acts such as wearing iron bracelets and rings, including some around their genitals.[112] Because of these acts showing their rebellious antinomian attitude toward Islam and conservative Sufism, the Qalandarīs were gradually ostracized and their later generations went into decay. However, the initial idea of shaving heads and facial hair and wearing partial clothing must have initially originated in Buddhist and Indian ideas in Central Asia[113] among these nonconformist Sufis.

In yet other examples of parallel practice, the Sufis in Iran wore a *khirqa* (a special mantle), much like the Buddhist monastic robe called a *civara,* [114] as an external sign of distinction from lay people. The longing of the Sufis for *khalvat* or solitude in order to appease the temptations is analogous to the Buddhist practice of contemplative seclusion. And the celibacy practiced by various Sufi individuals and sects along with *zuhd* are reminiscent of certain Indian[115] and Buddhist codes of ascetic conduct.

The notions of *reincarnation* and *karma* have not always been clear-cut in the Sufi system of belief. There were, however, a number of individual Sufi philosophers

and even certain esoteric sects that adhered to such notions. It is true that the belief in reincarnation, or the soul passing through a series of lives in different bodies, had been held by various groups and individuals in Iran and Iraq who were influenced by the Buddhists, Gnostics, and even neo-Pythagoreans.[116]

Important philosophers and Sufis such as Omar Khayyam,[117] Shahāb al-Dīn Suhravardī,[118] and Azīz al- Dīn Nasafī[119] were among those who adhered to a certain notion of reincarnation. Among some sects in Iran in the post-Mongol era, reincarnation had become somewhat part of their belief system in one way or another. The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Hūrūfī sect,[120] the later Nuqtavī sect, and the Ahl-e Haqq upheld some form of belief in reincarnation and worldly karma.

The ascetic practices of the Nuqtavī founder, Mahmud Pasīkhānī, including celibacy and his belief in *tanāsūkh* (transmigration of the soul) and resurrection in this world formed the core of Nuqtavī spirituality, all of which may point to the post-Mongol Buddhist influence.[121] In fact, a Safavid chronicler later asserted that when the Nuqtavīs were persecuted and fled to India, the culture of reincarnation was finally eradicated in Iran.[122] The western Iranian esoteric sect, Ahl-e Haqq, further elaborated on the concept of worldly *karma* as some sort of internal retribution or *mokāfāt-i bātinī*—the idea that bad deeds done to others will eventually come back to the performer of the deeds (*bad mikonī bad mībīnī*).[123] Such karmic retribution is considered to be a link to the next birth, whether in human or animal form. The combination of reincarnation and *karma* (internal retribution) of the previous lives[124] is designed to take place with each birth in this world. Meanwhile, the sect's belief in the reincarnation of 1,001 lives in the course of 50,000 years has been correlated with purifying one's character and action to a point of perfection.[125]All three sects were post–Il-Khan movements that may have indirectly come into contact with the Buddhist vestige in Iran, particularly in the northwestern territories.

Furthermore, the role of *Pīr* in Sufism is vital. *Pīr* refers to a master holding a private and one-to-one dialogue with the seeker in order to ensure and maintain the continuity and transmission of the mystical teachings. In comparison, the *bodhisattva* in Buddhism (at least in Mahāyāna Buddhism) is the one whose life and work is dedicated to the awakening of others while never letting the world be without a living Buddha. The work of the *bodhisattva* is justified in the context of active concern for the imbalances of others through *karunā* (compassion) as a hand-in-hand complement with the teaching of wisdom. In the culture of Sufism, individuals such as Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Bāyazīd, and Rumī would be comparable to *bodhisattvas*. Certainly their statues and portraits would have been constructed in the Buddhist setting if they were born as Buddhist. In addition, the development of Sufi concepts such as *vāsil* (mediator) and *dast-gīr* (lending a hand) also correspond to the duties of the *bodhisattva* in Buddhism.

Corresponding to the Buddhist concepts of *śunyāta* (emptiness) and *nīrvāna*, the Sufis yielded to *fanā* (non-self or self-annihilation) and *mahw* (dissolving or absorption), pointing to the dissolution of the egocentric mind and a means of waning of the influxes. *Fanā* also connotes the impermanency of self. This *fanā*-like or *nīrvāna*-like experience arises from the primordial empty mind observing the material world, "the unchanging ground of the changing Universe."[126] The Buddha expounded on *anatta* or *an-atma* (nonself) as one of the three perennial principles

in addition to the *annicca* (impermanency) and the *dukka* (unsatisfactoriness) inherent in all things. The Persian Sufis and poets have equally referred to nonself (*bī-khwīshī*), the impermanency (*fānī*) of all things in life, and unsatisfactoriness and suffering (*dard*) as facts of existence. In fact the metaphor of *love* in Sufism sometimes connotes a concealed and limitless state outside of mundane existence that can equate with the Buddhist *nīrvāna*. Although in Sufi poetry *love* is perceived to be attributed to God's essence and perfection, *love* at the same time is a human state of awakening and a frame of reference, and Rumī, in his poems, frequently hints at its nonanthropocentric and *nīrvānic* dimension:

A whole world sleeps in the night of heedlessness,
But we live in the day light of Love's sun.
If I should continue my explanation of Love,
A hundred resurrections would pass before I could complete it.
Know that Love branches are in Eternity-without-beginning, its roots in
Eternity-without-end
This tree is not supported by God's Throne, the earth, or a trunk.[127]

The Sufis, similar to the Buddhists, connected the nonself philosophy to the phenomenon of impermanency, that nothing in the human system is the same as it was a moment ago, and nothing will remain the same as a whole. In both Buddhist and Sufi contexts, through meditational practice, the conditioned mind empties itself until the experience of the nonself finds meaning. 'Attār, the Sufi poet of thirteenth century, poured out verses in his *Mukhtār Nāmeh* about nonself and the lack of a real self in anything:

If you care to rediscover the ancient secret,
Lose your "self," then from nonself recreate your existence.
Since the reality of everything in the world has no self,
How can you find "yourself" so long as you believe in self?

Become extinct to your "self" so that your true existence surfaces.
If you are conscious of your "self," when will your true state of being disembark?
As long as a trace of "self" remains in your vista,
Hundreds of separations from reality will be put before you.
Run away completely from your own existence
Since the path can be found through nonexistence.

Rumī, as the follower of 'Attār's Sufi footsteps, similarly shares:

Indeed, *bī-khwīshī* (selflessness) is the goal of the path,
For it is nothing other than Selfhood.
I will come to myself the instant I am obliterated and made selfless:
I am complete only when outside of the five senses and four elements.[128]

The experience of nonself in Sufi context has been interpreted as representing unification with God, and thus becoming aware of the totality of existence from the plane of an eternal ontological circle, not from a horizontal and linear human

perception that is constantly entangled with the world of changing objects. In other words, the conventional self is replaced by god-consciousness. The Sufis moved away from idea of a local and tribal god as represented in the Near Eastern Semitic religions while also rejecting the Islamic notion that God and human beings are the opposite of each other.[129] For example Rumī, like many other Sufi poets, has been suspected of having pantheistic views, because he accentuated the impersonal god and the empirical understanding of reality without much dependence on piety in his poetry. Meanwhile others have branded him as having clung to monotheism.[130] Nevertheless, attaining god-consciousness in Sufism is another parallel with the Buddhist notion of *śunyāta* in that all phenomena are empty in an ultimate sense. The emptiness itself is a formless, uncreated, and undying condition that is eternal. The Buddha's *nīrvāna* and *parīnīrvāna* could therefore be equated with the Sufi notion of *fanā* and exiting the human realm and entering god-consciousness, which also equates with the notion of *love*.

On a religious level, the Sufi notion of nonself or the Buddhist *anatta* is not acknowledged in the Islamic teachings. Islamic conformism has always been at odds with the *fanā* of Sufism because of the Islamic belief in the existence of *ruh* (psychic soul, highest element—the engine of spirituality or *ruhānīyya*) and *nafs* (lower self), which underlies the belief in existence in this world and the next.[131] On the other hand, the Islamic philosophers in search of higher plane of knowledge instead of choosing the notion of "nonself" of the Sufis as the basis of understanding the complex reality of things relied on the rational intellect (*'aql*). One of the qualities of the rational intellect is that it is neither the body nor the soul, yet it can perceive things in their reality without the medium of time.[132] The philosophers' perception of the rational intellect did not directly corroborate with the Sufi notion of *fanā,* but they correlated.[133] Nevertheless the gulf between Islamic conformism and Sufism on the question of concreteness of self, its role, and its destiny remains wide despite the attempts of great Sufis to bridge it.

On another plane both Buddhists and Sufis place value on the spontaneous nature of life in the present, not in its past or future interpretation. Moments come and go, joining nonexistence. A meditative Buddhist view expresses the following: "The sparks hovering up-and-down, born from fire, fall back into fire. Up and down the worlds are swinging, born from fire and again bursting into fire—birth and death or the *Wheel of Becoming* (*samsāra*) in eternal change."[134] This birth and rebirth of life is cyclical and fleeting; what seems to count is only the present moment. The cycle of the pleasurable, unpleasurable, lust, hatred, mind, all sensations, greed, anger, illusion, and objects of consciousness, according to the Buddha's sermons, burn and endlessly continue to emerge and become reduced to ashes and vanish.[135] Much Sufi poetry also alludes to this perspective of reality. The Sufi conception is also that the world vanishes into nonexistence every moment and begins afresh endlessly. Rumī's poem from his book of *Masnavī* points to the renewal and repetition of the world in every turn and moment:

> With every breath we and the world rejuvenate,
> The subsistence continues its renewal without our awareness.
> Life is like the flowing river in its bed, each passage is fresh,
> Similarly existence continues to flow by enlivening our dead corpse.

Certain Sufis also borrowed from Indian and Buddhist sources in the realms of magical and supernatural powers. The magical miraculous powers of masters of some Buddhist and Sufi traditions have been described. Some of the common abilities reported were psychic powers of knowing, self-multiplication, flying through the air, walking on water, moving mountains, and, by depending on suprasensory phenomena, changing the laws of nature.[136] In fact, some Sufis were allowed to settle in Tibet in the seventeenth century after impressing the fifth Dalai Lama by demonstrating magical powers and exchanging tricks.[137] Being impressed by the superior performances of magic by the Sufis as compared to their counterpart Lamas, who also possessed tantric magical powers, some Tibetans are said to have converted from Buddhism to Sufism.[138] There are similar anecdotes about a number of premodern Nepalis and Kashmiris who converted from their Hinduism and Buddhism to Sufi Islam. Many of the supernatural and miraculous powers of the Sufis reported in ʿAttār's *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā*, especially regarding ascetics of Khurāsān and Central Asia, suggest Indian and Central Asian roots to the practices. Because of the wide acceptance among general Muslims that a number of Sufis possessed such extraordinary powers, the same magical power was attributed to the Shiʿi Imams with their greater status, and of course to the Prophet of Islam. For example, some of the Buddhist *sutras* mention that the Buddha had reached the realm of light and the Sun and therefore had no shadow, and Mohammad also was said to have no shadow. [139] The prime architect of such Islamic propagation besides others was Majlisī, the seventeenth-century Shiʿi theologian in Iran.

As time passed, the fusion of practices originating from Khurāsān with those of Iraq became the foundation of a larger category of Sufism in which a threefold practice developed: *sharīʿa* (the laws of Islam), *tarīqa* (the path), and *haqīqa* (the truth). Other Sufis later added the fourth component of *maʿrifa* (knowledge).[140]

In brief, the origin of a vast array of Sufi practices and concepts can be found in Buddhism[141] or other Indian systems. Both Sufis and Buddhists maintained their master-disciple culture of transmission of the teachings to an extent that has always made the clerical class apprehensive, primarily due to the mystics' penchant for not observing the rituals and religious laws. Another cross-influence was the choice of language by the Buddhists and Sufis. Both doctrines' choice of "nondivine" and vernacular languages pushed away the "divine" and religious languages of their cultures. This suggests that both traditions wished to move away from the influences of the religious idiom and dogma in order to communicate about the reality of life. The Buddha's teachings were to be understood in vernacular languages but at some point inappropriately had been put into the style of recitation used in Vedic literature (*chandas*). In fact the Buddha himself in his own time had rejected religious language and asked for everyone to understand his teachings in their own vernacular language.[142]On a wider scale, the Persian language, as the vernacular language of various people in Central Asia, Khurāsān and eastern Iran, became the choice for diverse mystics and poets to transmit both the knowledge of Sufism and the philosophy of the *here and now* without any metaphysical twist or need for religious interpretation. To some extent, Persian Sufi poetry became a substitute for the Buddhist *sutras* because both poetry and the *sutras* were short teachings written in a language that average people could read and understand with the exception that Sufi poems were teachings without a central guru, unlike the *sutras*, whose central preacher was the Buddha.

Conclusion

In spite of the censoring of the interactions of the Buddhists with the emerging ascetic class in eastern Iran by the conformist Muslims such as Sulamī, the influences of Buddhism within the specific geographical and time frame cannot simply be negated as being nonexistent or unimportant. However, the arguments of this chapter are not suggesting that the early asceticism of eastern Iran was similar to Buddhism but rather that the circumstantial evidence points to the rise of *zuhd* or asceticism as a direct progeny of the waning Buddhism of the region.

Chapter 9

Jābir ibn Hayyān, Ibn Sīnā, and Mīr Fenderiskī: Any Buddhist Associations?

At times medieval Islamic scholars have been portrayed by historical writings in such a way that characterize them as conformist bearers of Islamic tradition. And yet an alternative interpretation based on circumstantial evidence aligns these vitally important figures in Islamic civilization more secular and with Buddhism than previously imagined. The analysis of circumstances related to the lives and intellectual approaches of certain individuals reveals their association with the world of Buddhism in various ways.

The following discussions are attempts to bring to light certain Buddhist associations of Jābir ibn Hayyān, Ibn Sīnā, and Mīr Fenderiskī, influential Islamic personalities, to challenge the old-fashioned Islamic perception, and at the same time attempt to bring to the surface the concealed cross-influences between Buddhist and Islamic cultures.

Let us consider chronologically these renowned personalities, whose standing and intellectual heritage in the Islamic context have been controversial. The presumably Buddhist aspects of their life and work will help us perceive the Buddhist elements in Iran that have been largely neglected.

1. Jābir ibn Hayyān, "The Buddhist Yogi"

One controversial individual associated with the world of Buddhism is Jābir ibn Hayyān, an expert in occult sciences and an alchemist better known among medieval Europeans as Geber (who lived between 721 and 815).[1] Jābir had two conceivable associations with the Buddhist world: his connection with the Barmakid family from Balkh, whose roots were Buddhist; and the fact that Jābir was perceived to have contributed to the work and inspiration of the Buddhist yogi way of life, according to the Tibetans. In this section we intend to examine a Tibetan approach to Jābir as

a Buddhist yogi as proposed by Michael Lee Walter, an approach that gives another dimension to his science of alchemy from the Buddhist point of view.

Although many scholars of Islam have avoided mentioning any Buddhist connection, Jābir's background points to his exposure to Buddhism. He is known to have belonged to the circle of the Barmakid family in Baghdad, whose forefather from Balkh had studied medicine in Kashmir before converting from Buddhism to Islam.[2] Yahyā b. Barmak, along with Jābir, is recorded to have known the art of alchemy, an attempt to combine Buddhist elements along with diverse elements of alchemy in Iran.[3] The Eastern Iranian world hosted many esoteric and yogic traditions including Buddhism, Manichaeism, and other traditions linked to Kashmir and Tibet. Jābir spent time in Khurāsān and apparently died in Tūs (northeastern present-day Iran),[4] which indicates his potential contact with the Central Asian and Indian art of alchemy. The Barmakids' interest in the esoteric sciences of India and Central Asia on one hand and their friendship with Jābir on the other revived the various esoteric and alchemical traditions that were perceived as suspicious by the Muslims.

The Jābirian science, as well as his occult sciences, is believed to have originated in India, China,[5] or Central Asia, rather than in the western Islamic lands. Under the patronage of the Barmakids, a cultural synthesis of Indian, Central Asian, Iranian, and Greek elements was formed under the auspices of Islam. In synthesizing diverse scientific and cultural elements, Jābir was a pioneer whose heritage and alchemical work bring him close to the Indian world. Thus Jābir's fame derives from his authority in alchemy, Gnostic practices, and occult sciences. His most influential work was the *Science of Balances*, describing a relationship between the physical or outer body (*zāhir*) and the hidden and internal body (*bātin*)—one of the themes of Ismā'ilī philosophy as well as Ikhwān as-Safā that flourished around the ninth and tenth centuries.[6]

Usually, the name of Jābir, in certain Shi'i sources, appears with the name of the sixth Shi'i Imam, Ja'far as-Sādiq (d. 765). Ibn Nadīm (d. 998) reports that Jābir appears as a legendary character in Shi'i sources, and appears to be the student or affiliate of Ja'far as-Sādiq.[7] Ibn Nadīm attempts to clarify a confusion regarding Jābir being the student of Ja'far: he says Ja'far Barmakī (d. 803) is mistaken for Ja'far as-Sādiq.[8] It is, however, through friendship and the medium of Ja'far Barmakī that Jābir finds his way to the court of the caliph in Baghdad.[9] Furthermore, it would seem unlikely for Ja'far as-Sādiq, an Imam and theologian who lived in Medina almost 40 years before Jābir, to be preoccupied with occult sciences of a type practiced in Khurāsān and India.

But if the Ismā'ilīs expanded the work of Jābir, it can be assumed that they were responsible for the emphasis on his relationship with the sixth Imam, Ja'far, the father of Ismā'il (the occult Imam of Ismā'ilīs). Thus the mention of the name Ja'far was caught in a confusion of two persons by the same name: one the sixth Imam, the other Ja'far Barmakī—so the Ismā'ilīs could be the source of this "intentional" name confusion.

And if Jābir had been linked with the Barmakid family, this association with the Barmakids leads us to believe that Jābir may have developed a certain interest in the Buddhist world since the Barmakids' background was Buddhist. But this link and

argument cannot be substantiated with evidence. However, given the eighth-century connection of eastern Iranian and Central Asian Buddhism with Tibet and India, it is highly possible that Jābir's search for a link between mind and body brought him both textually as well as individually into contact with the Indian and Central Asian region to test his science first hand.[10] In Walter's study of Tibetan sources, in which Jābir is referred to as *Dza-bir*, Jābir is introduced as a Sufi on a quest for the secrets of alchemy. He is believed to have practiced tantric Buddhism to strengthen both physical and spiritual stamina, which included longevity, power of the mind, overcoming disease, and liberating the body from its own nature, known as clearing the obstacles in the system.[11] In the spiritual context of the alchemical tradition, the transformation of coarse elements into subtle and glowing elements that leave few remainders after death is done through techniques of mental control and physical purification. This spiritual progress and transformation leads to, as Jābir put it, a "rainbow body." The "rainbow body" lengthens the life of the yogi in order to enable him to pursue his practice of a *bodhisattva* career.[12]

Tibetan Mahayāna Buddhist practitioners saw an advantage in combining the *bodhisattva* concept with yoga, an innovation introduced by Jābir that appealed to and was adopted by the Tibetan yogis. Jābir's yoga practices of sitting straight or sometimes sitting in a ball position, combining specific tantric practices of breathing (*pranayam*) with *zikr* or *mantra*, along with purifying fields of view without any visualized images and creating an uninterrupted unity of body, speech, and mind indistinguishable from one another, were supposed to rid the person from all illnesses and thus offer a kind of deathlessness.[13] Jābir's power in esoteric sciences aimed not only to bring about a spiritual transformation and inexhaustible bliss in one's lifetime but also, through the manipulation of physiology, to achieve immortality. Toward these ends, Jābir saw the training of immature consciousness as the prerequisite task.

To attain immortality, the yogi must practice at least six months of meditation and *pranayam* using the fingers to close ears, eyes, nostrils, and mouth to seize the wind and control the fire that makes the wind circulate in the head area. Combined with dance and song, such practices empower the weak intellect and in a short time many marvelous spiritual and emotional things occur, according to Jābir.[14] The practices prescribed by Jābir were designed to adapt the physiology to a different level with manipulation of gases and metabolism, which in a circular fashion would affect the mind, and the mind would be able to control certain physical and mental cravings in the body—a state of body and mind that would conquer a host of toxins and demons. The intellect and the soul are components to be refined in order to reduce the damage on the system before death.[15] Thus the Tibetan tantric yogis called Jābir the "immortal yogi," who was not only a healer but was also perceived to be a *bodhisattva* who had come to awaken others as well. His notion of immortality could have very well been compatible and in line with Buddhist *nīrvāna* and *parīnīrvāna*—ceasing to exist in the impermanent abode of the body and the material world.

This Buddhist account of Jābir suggests the need to review and reevaluate the existing versions of his career and whereabouts in order to clear them of any biases. The fundamental task of bringing to light the buried Buddhist elements in

connection with medieval scholars such as Jābir is a means to view the panoramic aspects of cultural interactions in a reasonable geographical and historical context. Furthermore, Jābir's scientific and spiritual quest in Khurāsān and his association with the Barmakid family are hints of interchanges between Buddhism and the young Islamic religion. In the shaping of the new sciences and spirituality in the early Islamic period Jābir played a key role, with ideas that may have stemmed from Buddhist or other Indian sources. It is also conceivable that Tibetans' admiration of Jābir led them to link him with Buddhism, a claim that after all may have some potential historical foundation.

2. The Buddhist Links of Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and the Sāmānids of Bukhārā

Ibn Sīnā or Latinized Avicenna (d. 1037) needs no introduction regarding his genius in medicine, philosophy, and other sciences. He was born around 980 in Kharmīthan,[16] at the time a rather unknown place near the city of Bukhārā in the eastern Iranian world (present-day Uzbekistan). Popular sources say that Ibn Sīnā was born into an Ismāʿilī family and studied under al-Nātilī, a friend of his father and a strong Ismāʿilī advocate.[17] Other sources describe Ibn Sīnā's rejection of Ismāʿilī doctrine, calling it a myth that he was an Ismāʿilī supporter. The same sources doubt the Ismāʿilī affiliation of Ibn Sīnā, which had been propagated only through false oral transmission.[18] Thus there is no reliable source that mentions Ibn Sīnā's Ismāʿilī affiliation.[19]

Ibn Sīnā therefore seemed to have belonged to no particular religion.[20] But if we take the proposition of Günter Lüling[21] that Ibn Sīnā's name and place of birth are potential clues about his Buddhist background, we are led to explore numerous references and hints in this regard. These include the significance of the place of his birth, the job of his father, and the implications of the name "sīnā." The other mystery is the place of origin of the Sāmānid dynasty (819–999) and whether the founder of the dynasty had any Buddhist affiliation.

Let us first discuss Ibn Sīnā's birthplace. The town of Kharmīthan was rather an obscure place for Ibn Sīnā's family to live, considering his father had an important government position, as has been mentioned in his autobiography. D. Gutas claims that Ibn Sīnā's father was Sāmānid governor of a city,[22] possibly at the Sāmānid residence in Ramīthan, a more important city than the nearby town of Kharmīthan. It seems highly conceivable that Ibn Sīnā's family would have had government ties in Ramīthan. Generally the rulers of Bukhārā made their residence in the city of Ramīthan. This city was also the winter residence of the Sāmānids during the time of Ibn Sīnā.

Ramīthan at that time had a Buddhist temple. The Sāmānid dynasty, known for their moderate and tolerant politics, accommodated the Buddhist as well as the Manichaean and Zoroastrian communities. The presence of Buddhism in Ramīthan raises two questions: Did Ibn Sīnā's father have any affiliation with the Buddhist temple in Ramīthan? Did the early Sāmānids themselves have any connections with Buddhism?[23] Ibn Sīnā's father was originally from Balkh and moved to Bukhārā later.[24] The reasons for his emigration in this context can only be surmised, but after

the Buddhist region of Balkh fell into the hands of the anti-Buddhist Saffārids and Ghaznavids in the tenth century, the ideal place for any Buddhist to relocate would have been Bukhārā under the tolerant Sāmānids. Bukhārā, up to the tenth century until the time when the Sāmānids were defeated, had itself maintained a level of Buddhist culture. Both questions above are difficult to answer with certainty, although historical circumstances and scattered hints point to the past Buddhist affiliation of the Sāmānids as well as Ibn Sīnā's father and family.

After the death of his father, the young Ibn Sīnā took over his official position, whatever that position may have been. Gutas describes the scenario: "He (Ibn Sīnā) was twenty-one. He was also given an administrative post, perhaps a district governorship. The fact that in his autobiography the death of his father and his assumption of administrative duties are mentioned closely together justifies the speculation that he may have succeeded his father as governor of Karmaytan."[25] Because of the lack of specific information, this so-called administrative position remains mysterious; Ibn Sīnā did not reveal the exact function of his father or himself in the last days of the Sāmānid dynasty.

Thus Ibn Sīnā consciously does little to reveal the function of his father as well as his own role before fleeing his hometown for various destinations after the fall of the Sāmānids in the year 999. However, a clue to his father's function may be the name *Sina*. Of course the Persianate world called him Pur Sīnā (son of Sīnā), and in Arabic the designation of *ibn* refers to "son of." Therefore the whole name *Ibn Sīnā* means the "son of Sīnā." Given that the name of his father was Abdullāh, "Sīna" may have been his functionary title. "Sīnā" was not a common Muslim name. Lüling quotes the study of A. von Gabain, claiming that the word *Sina* in the *Avesta* means "learned scholar." It seems there is no direct etymological connection, but in Central Asia, a Buddhist name, Buddha-sina, occurs in fifth-century Khotan.[26] There was also an Indian Buddhist scholar and chief monk known as Bodhi-sena (704–760, "Bodhi" in Sanskrit means "awakening") who had traveled to Japan.[27] Another historical Buddhist name that occurs is Maha-sena[28] ("Maha" in Sanskrit means "great"). The occurrence of the name *Sena* or *Sina* in Buddhist culture and history is not too infrequent. If *Sena* or *Sina* means "learned scholar" in this case, the name Ibn Sīnā could mean the son of a "learned scholar" or in this case son of a "Buddhist teacher," which suggests the possibility that Ibn Sīnā's father was involved with Ramīthan's Buddhist temple and perhaps even had an official function there. Other scholars of the time also had names indicative of their religious origins, such as *al-Majūsī* (the Zoroastrian) and (Abu Sahl) *al-Masīhī* (the Christian).[29] Neither Ibn Sīnā nor anybody else ever referred to the reason for or the meaning of his name. Was this truth of his past veiled, or later changed by Ibn Sīnā himself in his autobiography in order to protect his status and reputation in the Islamic world?

With the presence of Uighur-Turkish Buddhism in the region, the name of *Sina* may have been, though it is not certain, of Uighur-Turkish origin, given the vicinity of Bukhārā to Turkistan and the Turkish culture.[30] Furthermore, it is certain that Ibn Sīnā's philosophical stance provides a clue about introducing Buddhist views to his audience, to which we shall refer here.

But what about the possible association of the Sāmānids with the world of Buddhism? Given these historical circumstances, the tenth-century prevalence of

Buddhism in the area, and the religious tolerance of the Sāmānids, the association of Ibn Sīnā's father with Buddhism and his function in and around Bukhārā may not be far-fetched.

There is a mystery regarding the name of the *Sāmānids* of Bukhārā, which deserves scrutiny. The name and origin of the Sāmānids is attributed to the place called Sāmān, near Balkh, or perhaps near Samarqand. Ibn Hawqal, the traveler and geographer of the tenth century, mentions that Sāmān was a district in the Balkh territory from which the founders of the Sāmānid dynasty derived their name.[31] But no one with certainty can tell where the name *Sāmān* as the root of Sāmānid comes from. It is possible that Sāmān[32] and Sūmān refer to the same place, and that "Sāmānid" may have stemmed from Sūmān, another ancient town not far from Balkh and Samarqand. Sūmān's legacy went back to the Sasanid and Kushān dynasties. Sūmān was one of the oldest centers of Buddhism during the Kushāns, and in the Sāmānid era the town was called Sūmāniyya.[33]

A closer look at the names *Sāmān* or *Sūmān* may help to clarify. The Buddhists of Central Asia were called *Shamanīyya*, with the loss of letter "r" derived from the Sanskrit *śramanā* (ascetic wanderer) and adapted to the local languages: *śmn'nc* (Soghdian), *ş'saman* (Khotanese), and *sāmam* (Tokharian).[34] Ibn Nadīm mentions that *shamanīyya* were the majority of the inhabitants of the *Māwarā ul-Nahr* (Transoxiana), whose prophet was the Buddha: "Shamanīyya is related to Shamani, and these were the most exalted people of the earth and the religions."[35] Biruni (d. 1048) also refers to *Shamanīyya* and their difference from the Brahmins, clearly pointing to the Buddhists, and their temples that were called *bahār*.[36]

The phonetic similarity between the term *Shamanīyya* and *Sūmāniyya* is significant to make a correlation between a doctrine and a geographical title.[37] Confusingly, both Sūmān and shaman have often stood for the Buddhist people. Other Muslim scholars, such as Khwārizmī (d. 850) and Hamza Isfahānī (d. 970), refer to *Sūmāniyya* as being identical to *Shamanīyya,* and that they were the residents of the east on the borders of China, India, and Khurāsān who worshipped idols (Buddha statues).[38] As for the geographical and Buddhist connection of *Sūmāniyya*, according to the account of the Chinese pilgrim Hsūan-tsang in the mid-seventh century, the locale of Sūmān or ancient Sūmāniyya had two Buddhist monasteries.[39]

We are next led to investigate the source of the name of the Sāmānid founder, Sāmān Khūdā ("chief of Sāmān or Sūmān"), and whether he came from the Buddhist town of Sāmān, Sūmān, or Sūmāniyya. It cannot with certainty be determined, based on the term *shaman* used to designate a monk, whether Sāmān Khūdā (*shaman Khūdā*) was a "chief monk" or a "chief Buddhist monk." This is not to assume that the Sāmānid dynasty remained Buddhist or had any Buddhist tendencies, but it is to say that not only their name but also their geographical proximity to the Buddhist world of Central Asia and Turkistan in the tenth century brought them closer to the world of Buddhism than has been previously been considered.

The Sāmānids emerged in the early ninth century when the Muslim army had not completely supplanted Buddhism the way it had done in the territories under the Saffārid and Ghaznavīd dynasties. Either the silence or the alteration of the Sāmānids' genealogy kept their possible Buddhist heritage buried. If their patronage of Buddhism, whether in Bukhārā or in Ramīthan, was real, they surely

accommodated the last "Sina" in their administration before their downfall in the year 999, the time when Ibn Sīnā fled his hometown.[40] But naturally the founders of the Sāmānid dynasty, Ibn Sīnā, and even the Barmakid family of Balkh, had to remain circumspect to avoid exposing their Buddhist associations to the zealot Muslims of their time.

Ibn Sīnā's life circumstances changed after the Sāmānid state was overthrown by the Turkish Qarakhānids who entered Bukhārā in 999. At that point, he fled Bukhārā, writing the reason in his autobiography that "necessity called" but without mentioning the specifics of this call. Apart from the fall of Bukhārā it has been speculated that the he fled because of the religious intolerance of Ghaznavid Sultān Mahmud, who had summoned the top scientists to join his court.[41] Ibn Sīnā, as a functionary of the Sāmānid state, may have found his situation compromised with the new invaders who overthrew his patrons.[42] Living as a fugitive for the rest of his life, going to Khwārazm, Gurgān, Rayy, Isfahān, and finally to Hamadān, Ibn Sīnā also became a controversial philosopher whose startling ideas became inflammatory among the dominant religious establishment. He was often labeled by his religious opponents as a sorcerer and a conjurer of evil spirits.[43] Why would such a great physician, thinker, and scientist be suspended in the Islamic world?

Although not all scholars agree, Ibn Sīnā seems to have brought his philosophy from outside of Islam.[44] With due respect, he lived in a predominantly Islamic culture in which he could not ignore Islamic beliefs, the notion of revelation, and prophecy. Nonetheless there are a number of themes in combination, not necessarily as a single theme, that bring Ibn Sīnā's philosophical outlook close to Buddhist tenets. By giving attention to the topic of the transmigration of the soul (*tanāsukh*), Ibn Sīnā brought pressure to open up the discussion of it, though it was categorically rejected by the hard-core Muslim jurists who were suspicious of him and his philosophy. Ibn Sīnā also kept his distance from the theme of prophecy and its necessity for revelation, a stance that the Buddhist teachers of Sūmāniyya and even Ramīthan would have shared and endorsed.[45]

Furthermore, Ibn Sīnā rejected the theologians' views on the question of reward and punishment. G. Hourani takes up this topic. The cruel punishment depicted in a hell of chains and shackles in fire with snakes and scorpions, according to Ibn Sīnā, would be what one wished to inflict upon one's enemy, and such imagination is pure imagery without foundation. On a different level, to Ibn Sīnā the resurrection of the physical body after death was not something known through reason or entertained by the wise.[46] Ibn Sīnā, however, pragmatically anticipated that moral reasoning was needed to keep people from wickedness, otherwise they would commit unbearable acts. On a secular level, he explained reward and punishment thus: "According to the ancients, Reward is the occurrence of pleasure in the soul corresponding to the extent of its perfection, while Punishment is the occurrence of pain in the soul corresponding to the extent of its deficiency."[47] Here Ibn Sīnā does not provide us a reference to his source of belief, particularly when he makes the allusion "according to the ancients." Ibn Sīnā moved a level deeper in explaining Reward and Punishment as the conditions of previous life and the conditions of the mind in the present life.[48] To Ibn Sīnā, the *soul* (consciousness) was a continuous source and carrier of the good and bad deeds that would determine the quality of a person's present

and future lives. This is identical to the Buddhist conception of *karmic* result in this material world, whether the person would experience the bliss of *nīrvāna* or the bad *karmic* reincarnation.

This apparently Buddhist approach to the *karmic* concepts of bliss and suffering in this world, not in the religiously conceived next world, suggests that the mind is the only governing body responsible for this mental condition and that divine predestination cannot be reconciled with fluctuating human behavior. Control over one's own destiny could imply power over God's perceived predetermined knowledge about one's fellow humans. In this regard Ibn Sīnā was deliberately ambiguous to conceal the nontheistic nature of his approach that would conflict with the theistic approach to human destiny, a tactic that kept him within the range of permissible scholastic Islam without harming the public religion.[49]

Also, Ibn Sīnā's analysis on the laws of causality pointed to the corruptibility between what man perceives and what lies beyond his reach and understanding,[50] a kind of skepticism that can be noticed in Buddhist philosophy, especially after Nāgārjuna in the third century. Ibn Sīnā appeared to be the champion of logic and empirical philosophy, whose distinction between essence and existence and rejection of the creation and his endorsement of the logical independence of the world gave the religious community much to debate upon.[51]

Whether Ibn Sīnā actually introduced Buddhist conceptions behind a Greek philosophical guise is an assumption that requires future research, but his method of argumentation showed that he had tendencies to press for empiricism and secularism in the face of those who defended religious dogmatism. At the same time, his obscure bridging of Islamic thought with what he had learned from his father and in Bukhārā was to be interpreted according to one's orientation in Islamic or non-Islamic contexts. Subtly his non-Islamism is believed to slip into his non-Arabic writings, namely, in his native Persian work of *Dānish-Nāmeh ʿAlāī,* in order for it not to be openly attacked and repressed by the affiliates of the caliphate.[52]

It would be unlikely for a genius scholar such as Ibn Sīnā, coming from a region where Buddhism was still prevalent during his lifetime, to not have been familiar with Buddhist philosophy. At least one anecdote reveals his silence about it. Once a student approached Ibn Sīnā and asked, "Master, Master, have you heard this one? We have no continuous self." Ibn Sīnā remained silent. "Master, Master, why are you not answering me?" Ibn Sīnā replied, "I only answer the person who asked the question."[53] This clever response from Ibn Sīnā demonstrates his unwillingness to enter into a debate about the concept of "nonself" in its Buddhist context. Ibn Sīnā pretended not to acknowledge a "self" in the person who asked the question about no continuous and fixed self. The philosophy of "nonself" is in accordance with the psychological analysis of *Abhidharma* and the core of Buddha's teachings that were well known to the learned people of Bukhārā and Central Asia. In fact Ibn Sīnā's treatment of the topics of psychology and the internal faculties requires a thorough investigation against the analysis of *Abhidharma* [54]and other Buddhist teachings. On the question of the duality of the body and spirit, Ibn Sīnā, although inconsistent, tried to summarize the human constitution into one substrate, the soul (consciousness). In this case other bodily organs are instruments for the services of the consciousness.[55] He also rejected

creation *ex nihilo* and argued that the world has no beginning. By upholding this logical approach, he threw more dust in the eyes of the religious conformism of his time. It was not without reason that al-Gazzālī attacked Ibn Sīnā's position on coeternity of the world along with God, the concept of no resurrection, and his denial of God's knowledge of the transient or particular beings and things. A deeper look at Ibn Sīnā's empiricism with the power of reason can reveal the closeness of his philosophy to Buddhism, which was by and large a materialist philosophy with many attached psychological angles.

Ibn Sīnā may have been the first Islamic thinker to use a scholastic method that had been developed within the Sarvāstivādin School of Buddhism (now extinct), predominant in Balkh and Central Asia.[56] Sarvāstivādin, as a non-Mahāyāna school, was famous for giving significance to metaphysics. Before the advent of Islam, Buddhism was strong on both sides of the Amū Daryā, and those regions bordering Balkh in Central Asia later in the Islamic period had the largest number of *madrasas*, whose spread in the Near East was directly influenced by the Buddhist idea of combining worship with scholasticism.[57] One such explored *madrasa* northeast of Balkh was formerly a stūpa and monastery complex.[58] Former Buddhist teachers who converted to Islam may have been the source of Buddhist borrowings. During the age of conversion to Islam, hundreds of *vihāras* or Buddhist monasteries in Central Asia were possibly turned into *madrasas* or colleges. In these newly established *madrasas*, the most important Buddhist scholastic work, beginning in the tenth-century Buddhist teachings based on the methods drawn from *Abhidharmamahāvibhāsa*, could have been transmitted orally and incorporated into the teaching of Islamic topics.[59] It may not be unrelated to what he writes in his book of *Logic of the Eastern* (*Mantiq al-Mashriqīyin*). Ibn Sīnā ambiguously points to other sources he had used for his arguments: "And it is not improbable that certain sciences may have reached us from elsewhere than from the side of the Greeks."[60] Being a great logician of the Islamic world, he must have exploited many Indian and Buddhist sources available to him in the Bukhārā library.

Like Ibn Sīnā, other philosophers, astronomers, and naturalists and those native to eastern Iran and Central Asia will have to be examined for their original religious and philosophical orientations. Oftentimes, the Greek philosophical enterprise has masked the original ideas of these scholars stemming from the eastern Iranian world. Ibn Sīnā was a systematic and clever thinker who blended together in his medical and philosophical methods many elements from India and Central Asia, but he said less about them than about the elements from Greek and Islamic sources. Thus his interactions and experiences with the Buddhist world were seemingly concealed, although the traces and influences of his background and thought in Islamic philosophy cannot be ignored.

3. Mīr Fenderiskī and His Indian Connection

Mīr Abu'l Qāssim Fenderiskī (1562–1640) was a Sufi, poet, and philosopher of the Safavid period, known as Mīr Fenderiskī. Unlike other famous philosophers of his period in Isfahān, he occupied himself directly with Indian philosophy and mysticism. He is not narrowly associated with Buddhism alone, but fits into the larger

context of Indian philosophy and mysticism. After Biruni in the eleventh century, who learned Sanskrit and introduced Hinduism to the Islamic world with respect and dignity, Mīr Fenderiskī did no less in the seventeenth century, another progressive move toward interreligious understanding and dialogue. The affinity between Iran and Indian mysticism manifested in the work of Mīr Fenderiskī may have had deeper personal roots, although they were never openly revealed.[61] Having traveled frequently to India during the last 35 years of his life, Mīr Fenderiskī produced translations and commentaries on Indian works and introduced Indian thought to his students and contemporaries in Iran, an enterprise whose residue and influences are yet to be researched and understood.[62]

Mīr Fenderiskī and his father were probably from Central Asian Khurāsāni stock, though he is said to be from Astarābād. He seemed to be interested in alchemy and occult sciences but nothing is known of his teachers.[63] His interest in India was facilitated by the attitude of the Mughal dynasty in India, whose liberal monarchs were endorsing the translation of holy Hindu texts such as the Upanishads, the Mahābhārata, and the Bhagavad Gita into Persian. Some even hoped that there might be a fusion of Hinduism and Islam some day. Five years after his first trip to India, Mīr Fenderiskī undertook the responsibility of editing and commenting on a Hindu mystical text that had been translated from Sanskrit into Persian by Nizām al-Dīn Panipatī in the late sixteenth century. There is no doubt that Mīr Fenderiskī was familiar with Sanskrit; he had the confidence to tackle the ambiguities of and comment on selected parts of the famous text of *Yoga Vāsistha* (the Persian title is *Jūg-basasht*).[64] This text was a dialogue between a Hindu sage, Vāsistha, and his pupil, Ram, a work that seemed to be influenced by Vedantic yoga and Mahāyāna Buddhism.[65]

Mojtabai, an Iranian scholar and Indologist, has tried to understand why Mīr Fenderiskī traveled to India so frequently, keeping his distance from Iran and preoccupying himself with Indian mysticism. He describes Mīr Fenderiskī as a different kind of philosopher who was not interested in a scholastic or government position. He wore rough woolen clothes and appeared among the ordinary crowd of Isfahān in an unpretentious manner.[66] Scores of Mīr Fenderiskī's associates and colleagues left Iran to settle in India during the time of the tolerant Mughal ruler Shāh Jahān (r. 1628–1658) and engaged themselves in meditation, free thinking, and vegetarianism.[67] Mīr Fenderiskī himself practiced vegetarianism and *ahimsā*; he excused himself for not having ever gone on pilgrimage to Mecca because it would have meant sacrificing a sheep.[68]

Mīr Fenderiskī's commentaries on *Jūg-basasht* indicate his conceptual understanding of the Sanskrit terminologies used in Indian mysticism. His new elaboration on the meaning of *lobba* (greed) and *moha* (confusion) in one's worldly life were not just commentaries but practical guidelines on how to reach *šoka,* or *sukka* (bliss).[69] Mīr Fenderiskī believed that the three components of Indian mysticism were intertwined and their understanding would lead one to neverending bliss.[70] As the Buddha pointed out, *Lobba* (greed), *moha* (confusion), and *doša* (hatred) are the three poisons whose perpetuation not only continues *samsāra* (unremitting birth and death), but makes an attainment of final *šoka* or *nīrvāna* impossible.[71] There seems to be a Buddhist relevance to what Mīr Fenderiskī elaborated.

With his sophisticated mind, Mīr Fenderiskī placed Greek, Indian, and Islamic philosophical and mystical issues in a wider perspective. His commentaries, however, compared Greek ideas with the concept of *Brahman*, the highest Truth.[72] Mīr Fenderiskī introduced to Iran what the Mughal prince Dārā Shokūh had tried to introduce to India in order to bridge religions through the window of mystical ideals.[73] Mīr Fenderiskī pursued his ideals by means of practicing *varzesh-i morāqaba* (meditational yoga), clearing the mind from its attachments, distancing from empty religious rituals, maintaining a *bodhi* state (wakeful), and following vegetarianism.[74]

The similarity between the two visionary Indian and Iranian personalities is interesting. Dārā Shokūh (1615–1659) had also taken a special interest in what Mīr Fenderiskī was interested in, namely *Yoga Vāsistha* (*Jūg-basasht).*[75] Even before Mīr Fenderiskī, Dārā Shokūh dreamed that he saw Vāsistha order a translation of his book.[76] Dārā Shokūh was the eldest son of Shāh Jahān and Mūmtāz of India. Dārā Shokūh would eventually fall victim to the wrath of his younger brother Aurangzeb, who atrociously executed him on charges of apostasy. Dārā Shokūh was by no means a political warrior with the capacity to become a robust monarch; he was a mystic and a visionary whose translation of 50 Upanishads (called *Sirr-i Akbar*) as well as his own work, *Majma' al-Bahrayn (Joining of the Two Seas*), aimed to bring Vedanta closer to Sufism, or rather anticipated a religious marriage between Hinduism and Sufi Islam.[77] (It has been said that perhaps if this vision had been realized, India and Pakistan would not have separated three centuries later.[78]) Dārā Shokūh, in his attempt to universalize the message of the two religions, a task similarly undertaken by Mīr Fenderiskī, tried to move forward with the similarities of the two traditions and not get bogged down by their differences. In the Indian context, the reconciliation strategy went far enough that ʻAli, the son-in-law of the Prophet and the fourth caliph, was designated as the tenth reincarnation of Viśnu.[79] (Certain Hindus regard Buddha as the ninth reincarnation of Viśnu, after Krishna.) Dārā Shokūh acknowledged and admired the achievements of the Hindus. He even ascribed a positive virtue to their "idolatry" as a preliminary stage of knowing the energy of deities until the consciousness has evolved to discover the inner and true meaning of the religion.[80] In the mind of Dārā Shokūh, the attainment of final liberation, as for Mīr Fenderiskī, meant moving away from greed, from the egocentric self, for the sake of uniting one's fragmented mind and reaching *nīrvāna*, *fanā*, or in Hindu context, *mūktī* or *mokśa*.[81]

It is clear that Mīr Fenderiskī, besides encountering Vedanta, had also come under Buddhist influences during his 35 years of travel to Gujarat and to central and northern India. During his time in the seventeenth century, there was incredible philosophical potential in Isfahān with the revival of *ishrāq*, Greek, Zoroastrian, and even Indian philosophies, but the political culture and Shiʻi traditionalism had already ostracized Mīr Fenderiskī and his student Mullā Sadrā (d. 1640),[82] and their publications remained very limited.

Even though in Iran Mīr Fenderiskī found himself alone as the only Muslim promoting Indian mysticism and its possible marriage with Sufism of Islam, he escaped a violent death, unlike Dārā Shokūh in India. His interests gradually pushed him into seclusion and obscurity; little is known about his later life when he returned

from his final trips to India.[83] Mīr Fenderiskī's vegetarianism, yoga, meditation, and *ahimsā* may have been passed on to his students and audience discreetly. His ideas about metaphysics, similar to Mullā Sadrā, seem more dialectical and rational when he refers to God's relationship to the Cosmos and creation of things as suitable subjects for discussion in the context of physics rather than metaphysics.[84] The introduction of Indian mystical and philosophical traditions by Birunī in the eleventh century and Mīr Fenderiskī in the seventeenth century did not find any open adherents in Iran, but Mīr Fenderiskī's mysticism, motivated by Indian Vedanta and not free from Buddhism, made a discreet entrance through the back door of Sufism into Islamic philosophy.

Conclusion

This book has discussed various themes related to the interactions of the Iranian world with Buddhist culture in an effort to provide an alternative anthropological understanding of both worlds. There are, however, deeper Buddhist dimensions in the cultural life of Iran that need to be explored in the fields of cultural anthropology and as A. S. Melikian-Chirvani and David Scott have suggested, of archaeology as well. Not only what is buried under the ground, but many abandoned and obscure cylindrical-shaped towers, caves, ruins, and shrines in Iran need close scrutiny to discover their origin and initial purpose.

To decipher the hidden codes and practices of a culture, we must turn to other measuring tools of science and the social sciences. Some unwarranted religious and nationalist historiography will have to be challenged by newer comparative anthropological and archaeological parameters to understand the origin of certain cultural objects and cultural practices that lie outside of the dominant culture. New translations and interpretations of previously inaccessible texts can also lead us to new insights about the role of Buddhism in Iran. In this book a preliminary Buddhist narrative about Iran has been presented, whereas similar anthropological narratives about the implicit and dormant yet insidious role of Manichaeism, Mazdakism (Khuramdīnīyya), Mithraism, Shaivism, and Christianity in the cultural formation of Iran are long overdue. Iran is a daughter culture with many inherited characteristics that can be seen if we trace back the genealogy of its parent cultures. The past interactions between the Buddhist and Iranian worlds have led to a transmutation in certain aspects of culture in Iran that have continued to the present time. The similarities and parallels between the two worlds as presented in this book are aimed to deepen our understanding of previously veiled cultural and intellectual currents and point to the extent of exchanges between Iran, Islam, and Buddhism. There are areas that require further research. The imitation of Buddhist iconography and imagery by the miniaturists in the Islamic period, the Buddhist influences in the cultural life of the Persian Gulf littoral, and the development of nontheistic philosophy and spirituality in Iran need closer scrutiny in order to demonstrate that certain cultural adaptations in Islamic Iran may have partly or entirely drawn their elements from the Buddhist culture.

Iran, like many other countries, has an incomplete image of itself based on the limited information left behind in the often-slanted historical sources. Some misperceptions about Iran are due to a one-dimensional religious or nationalist

narrative that has swayed the interpretation of the historical sources to favor a particular doctrinal or ideological orientation. Oftentimes the ideologues and average citizens in Iran have two cultural and historical perceptions, sometimes distinct and sometimes intertwined: Islamic and secular Iranian. New academic approaches to studying culture and history will have to provide wider and nondivisive alternatives and deeper insight for the readers and general public in regard to organic cultures and external influences. By broadening our approaches, we can hope that the often biased and incomplete historical accounts give way to more comprehensive intellectual choices, replacing the nationalistic and religious purism ingrained in most people's cultural upbringing.

The road needs to be paved for nations such as Iran to engage in the new global and religious dialogues. The deeper our understanding of the multifaceted nature of Iranian culture, the greater our respect for and chance of coexistence with other doctrines and cultures will become. It will also help people move away from the preconceived and fixed concepts of "mine" and "yours," "right" and "wrong" in the realm of cultural heritage, especially in the dynamic global setting in which we live today.

The last point is that the principle of inquiry has become a critical tool and a great stimulus for the advancement of the hard sciences, without which stagnation would predominate in scientific and intellectual thinking. The same principle of asking questions, casting doubt on, and providing convincing and comparative arguments about previously accepted beliefs makes the field of the social sciences more dynamic as well. But this enterprise, particularly in regard to probing certain religious, nationalist, or other cultural practices and beliefs, requires intellectual willpower as well as political and religious tolerance.

A lasting conclusion, for a humanist approach, it is imperative to travel beyond national boundaries before we put pen to paper. A well-traveled researcher savors diversity, yet far greater appreciation surfaces when the similarities in human cultures become more apparent.

Appendix

Nonviolence and Rationalism: A Crypto-Buddhist Influence

It is important to recognize the significance of a rationalist, nonviolent, and at times nontheist position held by a number of medieval literary figures in Iran and its neighbors. Even though it is difficult to establish with certainty whether the initial inspiration for it was drawn from Indian, particularly Buddhist, sources, there are similarities to the Buddhist approach. The interpretations of nonviolence or Indian *ahimsā* (nonkilling) among medieval ascetics and philosophers ranged from taking positions against shedding human blood and slaughtering animals to practicing vegetarianism. Their adoption of rationalist discourse in this context meant the rejection of supernatural intervention in human life, as well as of the whole notion of revelation and even the need for prophecy.

Both the neo-Platonists and the Pythagoreans as secular advocates of nonviolence may have influenced the intelligentsia of the Islamic era. Mānī (d. 274), with his Gnostic views and endorsement of nonviolence and nontheism, may have been another source of influence on literary figures such as Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. ca.760). As it is noted, the discourses of Ibn al-Muqaffa' attempted to demystify God, prophecy, and the revelation.[1] The main proponents of spreading nonviolent and nontheistic views were Mānī and later Manichaeans who had been partly influenced by Buddhism, as discussed in chapter 3.

The ninth-century argument of *Barāhima* was first put forward by ʿIssā ibn al-Warrāq (d. 861) and then by Ibn Rāwandī (d. 910), who argued against blood sacrifice as well as against the necessity of revelation and prophecy so long as human intellect remains intact and in control of its destiny.[2] Behind the fictitious and Indian *Barāhima* schism lay various ideas expressed in opposition to dogmatic views; the true nonviolent and antimetaphysical inspirations of these views may have originated from Buddhist (or perhaps Manichaean) sources and perspectives.[3] Sometimes *Barāhima* adherents are mentioned as rejecting even the existence of God.[4]

Interestingly, the term *Barāhima* sounds similar to the Indian *Brahma*. Regarding the perception of Brahma by the Muslims in medieval times, Shahrastānī (d.1153) considers the followers of the Buddha to be a subsect of Brahma (Brahman), who attempted to prove the irrationality of prophecy.[5] Although not all the medieval texts are accurate about Indian religions, the connection between the term *Brahma* and Buddha's nontheistic doctrine, as well as the usage of *Barāhima* by al-Warrāq and Ibn Rāwandī to disprove revelation, may, at least from the terminological standpoint, have the same origin and objective.

Ibn Rāwandī, seemingly a Manichaean, repudiated the supernatural power of revelation and prophecy. Ibn Rāwandī's well-known work *Dāmigh* (other than his *Kitāb az-Zumūrrūd*) was a literary prototype and parody designed to discredit the miraculous style and content of the Koran, since the Koran was held in high regard by Muslims for its supposedly inimitable Arabic literary perfection, argued to be unintelligible for those whose mother tongue was not Arabic.[6] The eleventh-century Abul ʿAlā Maʿarrī's book of *al-Qifrān* is another parody of the belief in heaven and hell and of people's gullible religious beliefs.[7]

Nonviolence and rationalist views from the ninth and tenth centuries were passed on to the next generation, represented by the rationalist and strict vegetarian Syrian poet Abul ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī (d.1058). Al-Maʿarrī's ideas and practices are also presumed to have stemmed from Indian origins (or at least from outside of Islam).[8] He made it his goal to revive rationalism even though it was defeated again by the powerful Sufi and theologian al-Ghazzālī (d.1111).[9] In many ways al-Maʿarrī was similar to the famous tenth-century chemist Rāzī, who supported the idea of human autonomy with the power of reason as the only savior of man by rejecting the revelation and prophecy.[10] Al-Maʿarrī was an inheritor of the trend of rebelling against the dogmatic theism and religious claims that had already left its imprint with the groundbreaking works of thinkers such as Ibn Warrāq, an-Nazzām (d.ca.845)[11], and al-Rāwandī, who were accused of defaming God, the Koran, and the tenets of Islam.[12]

Al-Maʿarrī was depicted by nineteenth-century Orientalists as a "philosopher poet" and a "free thinker" like similar personalities before and after him.[13] Many believe that al-Maʿarrī with his radical poetry is believed to be the source of inspiration and daring for Omar Khayyam (d. 1131) of Neishābur to compose in Persian what al-Maʿarrī composed in Arabic.[14] Both poets were accused of holding anti-Islamic views.[15] There was even a belief among certain traditional Muslims that both Abul ʿAlā Maʿarrī and Omar Khayyam were atheists or revivers of some ancient tradition, and the suspicious among the Muslims labeled both poets as *zindīq* (non-Muslim, Manichaean).[16] Whether Khayyam received his poetical and nonreligious inspirations from the nonconformist al-Maʿarrī cannot be established with certainty, but both poets were strict vegetarians[17] and rationalist thinkers, and the similarities of the messages in their poetical metaphors are striking. Khayyam used poetic license to provide relief for those in the troubled journey of life. Aminrazavi confirms that "Khayyam's approach is fundamentally a Buddhist one . . . solving the problem of suffering is strikingly similar to the Buddhist path."[18] Khayyam's refraining from excessiveness, his suspension of metaphysical speculation and relinquishing of the effort to solve the mystery of Creation, his renouncing of suffering independent of God—all without denouncing the world—recall the Buddha's Four Noble Truths.[19] Khayyam

emphasizes empiricism and shares his doubts about metaphysical speculations and a religious imagery of after-life by cautioning people to rely on rational reasoning:

> One lot cogitates on the way of religion,
> Another ponders on the path of mystical certainty;
> But I fear one day the cry will go up,
> 'Oh you fools, neither this nor that is the way!'[20]
>
> I saw a waster sitting on a patch of ground,
> Heedless of belief and unbelief, the world and the faith—
> No God, no Truth, no Divine Law, no Certitude:
> Who in either of the worlds has the courage of this man?[21]

Rationalism and nonviolence in its spiritual context were equally well respected by the proponents of early asceticism and philosophy in Iran. Ibn Sīnā (d.1037) and Mīr Fendereskī (d.1640) are just two of those who adopted nonviolence and vegetarianism and held views that challenged the conformist Islamic dogma.

Another representative of rationalism and nonviolence was Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī (d. 925 or 932) from Rayy. A chemist, poet, musician, and singer, Rāzi was also the greatest clinical genius among the physicians in the Islamic world. His most celebrated works were on smallpox and measles. The former disease was unknown to Greek medicine; consequently, his work was translated and printed more than 40 times between 1498 and 1866 in Europe.[22] Rāzi's work in philosophy is less known, partly because of the disappearance of his philosophical writings. But what did survive is uniquely revealing. Rāzi refused to believe that philosophy and religion could ever be united. Rāzi was against not only animal suffering and slaughtering,[23] but also any unverifiable assertions about revelation and prophecy. To the shock of Muslim believers, he rejected the concept of revelation and argued that there is no need for prophecy, since everyone is given enough reason and intelligence and should be able to salvage himself in this world.[24] According to him the revelation was the source of much bloodshed, and he considered it unnecessary to have one people who claimed to possess the knowledge of divine revelation attacking the less fortunate who did not. To this effect Rāzi dedicated two works: *On the Devices of the False Prophets* and *On the Repudiation of the Prophecy.*[25] Rāzi's rejection of prophecy has also been associated with Brahmanism (perhaps what al-Warrāq called *Barāhima*) in Islamic sources, even though any influence of Pythagorean ideas on Rāzi is speculation.[26] Rāzi is believed to have learned his free-thinking rationalism from another medieval scholar, Abul 'Abbās Irānshahrī.[27] Irānshahrī's work on Buddhism[28] (now lost) and his knowledge of Buddhist philosophy may have been the source of Rāzi's positions against slaughtering animals and against the necessity of revelation and prophecy.

Masu'dī (d. 965), however, in his *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab,* refers to Rāzi adhering to the doctrine of the Sabians of Harran,[29] who also rejected prophecy.[30] Masu'dī mentions that the Sabian doctrine was founded by Budāsef (Buddha or *bodhisattva*),[31] suggesting a connection with India and Buddhist ideas among the Sabians. Shahrastānī has much detail on the Sabians and their lack of a divine book, subscribing to philosophies of rationalism and materialism, worshipping idols, and being of Indian origin.[32] Whether Rāzi had come under direct or indirect Buddhist influences and

through what means cannot be confirmed with certainty, although circumstantial evidence seems to perhaps point in that direction.

In any case, Rāzi adopted the principle of *ahimsā* and took an empirical view of human existence that deemed no room necessary for any intervention of divine forces in human affairs. During those early periods of Islam, atheism did not have the same interpretation as in modern times, but Rāzi's theism was not sufficient and thus was denounced and never gained any systematic following.[33]

Buddhist ideas were known among the medieval Islamic intelligentsia even though Buddhism was unmentionable around religiously zealous people. It is possible that the medieval Islamic writers may have used categories such as Barāhima, Sabian, or Pythagorean and neo-Platonist as façades in order to deflect attention and avoid the suggestion that Buddhism was a contributing doctrine to nonviolence and empiricism. It is rather difficult to account for all the ways and degrees to which people followed rationalism and nonviolence, but this stream of ideas can reasonably be suspected to have stemmed from extra-Islamic sources, in this case partly from Indian dialectics and Buddhist sources.

Among literary figures, the famous twentieth-century Iranian novelist Sādiq Hedāyat (d. 1951) was perhaps the last in the line of literary figures who remained a proponent of nonviolence, celibacy, vegetarianism,[34] and secularism. The deep repercussions of Indian or Buddhist thought on one of his most celebrated and complex novels, *Boofe Koor* (The Blind Owl), may be due to his short stay in India. In this novel, Hedāyat develops various allegories and themes such as suffering, the impermanency of life, and the presence of many lives living inside a person (previous reincarnations), the importance of the here and now, the nothingness of the world, the metaphor of the lotus, tantric aspects of the sexual unification of male and female, and even the color of saffron, which are all strongly suggestive of Hindu-Buddhist influences.[35] Hedāyat also had a great affinity for Khayyam's philosophy and exploited the themes of impermanency, no heaven and hell, and seize the moment, taken from Khayyam's *rubā'īyyāt* (quatrains) for his *Boofe Koor*, which he completed and published in India. [36]

Hedāyat's nonconformism and his brief exposure to Hindu-Buddhist philosophy hints at an affinity toward empiricism in his personal life and his writing, and at the end, his uniqueness and eccentricity turned him into a strong critic of his own native culture and Islamic religion.

In conclusion, the promotion of nonviolence and rationalism by the intelligentsia in Iran in different periods of its history seem to be at least partially connected with the nontheism and empiricism of the Buddhist and Indian worlds. The defiance against the imposition of religious dogma on vast and heterogeneous communities has long continued in order to bring about an undisturbed coexistence between those who doubt the idea of Divine intervention in human affairs, promote nonviolence, and reject the notion of prophecy and godly rule with those who believe the religion of God cannot be compromised. The constant need for those who revolt against the foundation of metaphysics to flee from being persecuted in the zones of a "theology of fear"[37] has raised strong ethical concerns about the rights of groups and individuals in modern times. For sharing the same and equal rights among all groups in the society, the proponents of religious dogma will eventually have to reflect and change their position.

Notes

Prologue: Goal of the Book and the Method

1. See Tony K. Stewart and Carl W. Ernst, "Syncretism," *South Asian Folklore: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Peter J. Claus and Margaret A. Mills (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 2003).
2. See T. H. Barrett, "Taoist and Buddhist Mysteries in the Interpretation of the 'Tao-Te Ching,'" *JRAS* 2 (1982): 35–43.
3. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 831–32; S. Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 22.
4. See Thomas F. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 11, 12, 194, 296; Thomas F. Glick and Oriol Pi-Sunyer, "Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11/2 (April, 1969): 145–46. I am grateful to Michael G. Morony for bringing the approach of Julián Ribera to my attention.
5. See Shahrām Pāzookī, "Goft o gooy-i farā tārīkhī va farā goftegoo dar andīsh-i Izutsu," *Sokhangooy-i Sharq va Gharb* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1382/2003), 11–19. For diverse views on the problems of orientalism, Western historicism as well as humanism, see the collected papers and discussions of Western, Japanese, and Iranian scholars (October 1977) in a translated volume in Persian: Andīshe Gharbī va Goftegooye Tamadon-hā (*L'impact planétaire de la pensée occidentale*), (Tehran: Farzan Publishers, 3rd edition, 1387/2008).
6. For discussions of the formation and study of the "founded religion" and "ethnical religion," see U. Bianchi, C. J. Bleeker, and A. Baussani (eds.), *Problems and Methods of the History of Religions*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), see especially pages 20–58.
7. There is a very useful discourse on the science of religion by Fathullah Mojtabai, *Dīn Padjoohī*, (Tehran: Hermes, 1380/2001).

1 Introduction to the Buddha's Key Spiritual and Philosophical Concepts

1. Arthur Lillie, "Buddhist Saint Worship," *JRAS* 14/3 (July, 1882): 218–226.
2. See Mohammad ibn Abdul Karīm Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal,* vol. 2 (Tehran, 1387/2008), 431.
3. Chögyam Trungpa, *Glimpses of Abhidharma* (New Delhi: Shambhala, 2002), 109.

4. See Patricia E. Karetzky, *Early Buddhist Narrative Art: Illustration of the Buddha from Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc.,2000), xl.
5. D. Keown, *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 22–24.
6. See Otto Schrader, "Zum Ursprung der Lehre vom Samsāra," *ZMDG* 64 (1910): 333–335, for his approach to *samsāra* from the Hindu as well as Buddhist point of view.
7. Y. Karunadasa, "The Buddhist Doctrine of Anatta," in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*, edited by David J. Kalupahana (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 11–12.
8. D. Kalupahana,"Pratityasamut Pada and the Renunciation of Mystery," in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*, edited by David J. Kalupahana (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 21, 31.
9. Th. Schreve, "Ein Besuch im Buddhistischen Purgatorium: Aus dem Tibetischen erstmalig übersetzt," *ZDMG* 65 (1911): 471–486. See also B. C. Law, *Heaven and Hell in Buddhist Perspective* (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2004).
10. D. Kalupahana, *Ethics in Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 10, 21.
11. D. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities And Discontinuities* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1992), 101.
12. P. D. Premasiri, "The Social Relevance of the Buddhist Nibbana Ideal," in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*, edited by David J. Kalupahana (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 45–46.
13. Karunadasa,"The Buddhist Doctrine," 12–16.
14. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, 13.
15. G. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22.
16. R. D. Gunaratne, "Space, Emptiness and Freedom," in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*, edited by David J. Kalupahana (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 38–40; Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*, 167.
17. D. Kalupahana, *Karma and Rebirth: Foundation of the Buddha's Moral Philosophy* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2006), 37–46.
18. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy,* 52, 59.
19. Kalupahana, *Ethics,* 31.
20. R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61–62.
21. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 66, 68.
22. A. K. Warder, "On the Relationships between Early Buddhism and Other Contemporary Systems," *BSOAS* 18/1 (1956): 58–59.
23. D. Kalupahana, *The Buddha and the Conception of Freedom* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Cultural Centre, 2008), ix, 1–2. The term, *nirvrtatva* occurs in post-Budhhist Upanishad, 1.
24. K. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, translation and introduction by Jan van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 169–177.
25. Cf. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 33, 206–207, 218–221, 243, 257, 270.
26. Kalupahana, *Ethics*, 93.
27. Kalupahana, *Ethics*, 28.
28. *Karma* refers to the present and future welfare of the individual and his environment, far wider consequences than the actions being right or wrong.
29. Kalupahana, *Karma*, 49.

30. Keown, *Buddhism*, 37; Kalupahana, *Ethics*, 100.
31. Paul J. Griffiths, "Notes Towards a Critique of Buddhist Karmic Theory," *Religious Studies* 18/3 (September, 1982): 277–291.
32. Trungpa, *Glimpses*, 16.
33. Gethin, *The Foundations*, 80, 82.
34. Gethin, *The Foundations*, 182–199; see also Keown, *Buddhism*, 84–96.
35. Gethin, *The Foundations*, 80, 72.
36. D. Kalupahana,"Consciousness", *Buddhist Psychology, Encyclopedia of Buddhism Extract* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, 1995), 76–77.
37. Keown, *Buddhism*, 28.
38. K. Malalgoda, "Millennialism in Relation to Buddhism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12/4 (October, 1970): 425.

2 The Early Spread and Influences of Buddhism in Iran

1. Philippe Gignoux, "Les quatre Inscriptions du Mage Kirdīr," *Studia Iranica* 9 (1991): 69–70; Christopher J. Brunner, "The Middle Persian Inscription of the Priest Kirdēr at Naqš-i Rustam," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George* (1974): 108–109; see also M. Sprengling, "Shahpuhr I, the Great on the Kaabah of Zoroaster (KZ)," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 57/4 (October, 1940): 341–43, 384, 407, for the presence of the Buddhists during the Sassanid, see p. 366. See also R. Emmerick, "Buddhism, I. In Pre-Islamic Times," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: 1990), 493.
2. A. K. Warder, "On the Relationships between Early Buddhism and Other Contemporary Systems," *BSOAS* 18/1 (1956): 46, 61.
3. G. Samuel, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 197.
4. B. N. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*,(New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubishers, 1987), 214–215.
5. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, translated from the Chinese of Hiuen-tsiang, A.D. 629 by Samuel Beal (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Cooperation, 1969), 47–48.
6. R. E. Emmerick, "Buddhism in Central Asia," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 401; see also Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, 90.
7. See G. Fussman, "Aśoka and Iran," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* accessed January 2010.
8. R. E. Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," in *The Cambridge History of Iran,* vol.3 (2), edited by Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 951.
9. For the Buddhist influences on Greek thought and Judeo-Christian theological thinking, see J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Consolation and a Parable: Two Contacts Between Ancient Greece and Buddhists," *BSOAS* 65/3 (2002): 518–528.
10. Serindia was composed of ancient Chorasmia and Soghdīana as the ancient kingdoms of Khotan and Kucha.
11. K. N. Dikshit, "Buddhist Centers in Afghanistan," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 229.
12. Wilhelm Halbfass, "Early Indian References to the Greeks and the First Western References to Buddhism," in *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 1

(Göttingen, 1991): 204–206. Clemens of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) mentions Indian subgroups called *sarmanai* (Sanskrit *śramanas* referring to the Buddhists) who practiced monasticism and asceticism, and refers to teachings of *Butta* (Buddha); see also R. Webb, "The Early Spread and Influence of Buddhism in Western Asia," *Buddhist Studies Review* 10/1 (1993): 77–79, The later Gnostic and neo-Gnostic monastic communities may be a direct influence of Buddhism and the Buddhist concept of *Sangha*, 78.

13. *Alberuni's India*, vol. 1, translated and edited by Edward C. Sachau (London, 1910), 21.
14. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, 90.
15. Emmerick, "Buddhism Among Iranian Peoples," 950.
16. Emmerick, "Buddhism Among Iranian Peoples," 951.
17. Emmerick, "Buddhism Among Iranian Peoples," 952.
18. P. Banerjee and R. C. Agrawala, "Hindu Sculptures in Ancient Afghanistan," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 217; K. C. Sagar, *Foreign Influences on Ancient India* (Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1992), 270; see also M. Longworth Dames "Afghānistān," *E. J. Brill's First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913–1936*, edited by Th. Houtsma (Leiden: 1993), 160.
19. The ancient ruins of Taxila lie 35 kilometers northwest of Rawalpindi (near modern Islamabad).
20. Sten Konow, "On the Nationality of the Kuşaṇas," *ZDMG* 68 (1914): 85, 88, speculates that Kushāns are of either Turkic or Iranian stock.
21. Emmerick, "Buddhism in Central Asia," 400.
22. The name of the southeastern province of *Nangarhar* in Pashto finds its roots in Nagara Vihāra. I have obtained recent photographs of the old site; there is nothing recognizable left other than some rubble covered with mud.
23. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 95; Dikshit, "Buddhist Centers in Afghanistan," 232.
24. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 96–97.
25. Shotorak is near Bagrām where Kaniśka coins with the image of Buddha were found after an excavation.
26. Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 955; see also A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire du bouddhisme dans l'Iran musulman," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 2 (1974): 9–10, referring to two sources: *Borhān-i Qāte*, mentioning an idol temple near Kabul called Shāh Bahār, and *Tārikh Bayhaqī*, indicating the valley of Shāh Bahār near Ghazni.
27. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 55.
28. Fa-hien was the first Chinese pilgrim who traveled to India and brought back a collection of scriptures to translate into Chinese.
29. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, 98, 99, 130, 213.
30. Dikshit, "Buddhist Centers in Afghanistan," 232; see also R. N. Frye, "Notes on the History of Architecture in Afghanistan," *Ars Islamica* 11/12 (1946): 202.
31. Sally Hovey Wriggins, *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 41.
32. Paolo Daffinà, "Sulla più antica diffusione del buddismo nella Serindia e nell'Iran orientale," *Acta Iranica* 4 (1975): 184, 188, 190; Emmerick, "Buddhism,I: In Pre-Islamic Times," 493. For Serindia, see note 10.
33. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, 39.
34. Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 960.

35. There were two groups of Tukhārian people of the Caucasus who spoke Indo-European languages; one group in Kucha and Turfan, and the other to the west in the eastern region of Balkh that became known as Tukhāristān.
36. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, 87, 96–97, 214–215; E. G. Pullyblank, "An Shih-Kao," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 1984, accessed October 2010; see also Webb, "The Early Spread," 61.
37. Simon Gaulier et al. *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia* (Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1976), 5; Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 955.
38. Cf. Robert L. Brown, "God on Earth: The Walking Buddha in the Art of South and Southeast Asia," *Artibus Asiae* 50/1–2 (1990): 73–107.
39. Ananda Coomaraswamy, "The Origin of the Buddha Image," *The Art Bulletin* 9/4 (June 1927): 287–329; see also Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 955; see also Gaulier et al. *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 3–6; Pentti Aalto, "On the Role of Central Asia in the Spread of Indian Cultural Influence," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 257.
40. J. B. "Greco-Buddhist Sculpture," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 8/6 (June, 1913): 133–134.
41. Chhaya Bhattacharya, "India—A Major Source of Central Asian Art," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 290, 296–297.
42. Rudolf M. Riefstahl, "Persian Islamic Stucco Sculpture," *The Art Bulletin* 13/4 (December, 1931): 455; H. Heras, "Expansion of Buddhism in Afghanistan," *The Maha Bodhi* 43/4 (April 1935): 180–182; see also P. K. Acharya, "Indo-Persian Architecture," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 3.
43. Herwin Schaefer, "Two Gandhāran Temples and Their Near Eastern Sources," *JAOS* 62/1 (March, 1942): 61, 65, 67.
44. Stephen C. Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism:* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 171; see also Heinz Bechert, "Zur Frühgeschichte des Mahāyana-Buddhismus," *ZMDG* 113 (1963): 530–535.
45. Emmerick, "Buddhism in Central Asia," 402.
46. See Gaulier et al., *Buddhism in Afghanistan*, 12; David Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," *East and West* 40 (1990): 68.
47. Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism: A Survey*, 101.
48. Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," 67.
49. Pandit Sheonarian, "Zoroastrianism and Buddhism," *The Maha Bodhi* 42/1 (January 1934): 19; see also Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 956.
50. Daffinà, "Sulla più antica diffusione del Buddismo," 179.
51. Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 956.
52. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l'Iran Ancien* (Paris, 1962), 248–249.
53. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l'Iran*, 244.
54. Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," p.68.
55. Webb, "The Early Spread," 61.
56. Hans-Jaochim Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen im iranischen und türkischen Manichäismus," in *Synkretismus in den Religionen Zentralasiens*, edited by Walther Heissig and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 62.
57. Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen," 58, 64, 69.
58. Daffinà, "Sulla più antica diffusione del buddismo," 179,180, 187; see also Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," 67.

59. See T. Bloch, “Die zoroastrischen Gottheiten auf den Münzen der Kuşaṇa-Könige,” *ZMDG* 64 (1910): 739–744.
60. Cf. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 45.
61. Martha L. Carter, “An Indo-Iranian Silver Rhyton in the Cleveland Museum,” *Artibus Asiae* 41/4 (1979): 311–314.
62. Gaulier et al. *Buddhism in Afghanistan*, 7.
63. Jeffrey Broughton, *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen* (Los Angeles, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 54.
64. Webb, “The Early Spread,” 62, quoting the text of Yang Hsūan-chih, who mentions Bodhidharma came from Po-ssū-hu-jen, which is identified with the mentioned areas of Central Asia.
65. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 71.
66. Boris J. Stavinsky, “‘Buddha-Mazda’ from Kara Tepe in Old Termez (Uzbekistan): A Preliminary Communication,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 3/2 (1980): 89–94.
67. Stavinsky, “‘Buddha-Mazda,’” 93–94.
68. Muriel B. Christison, “Buddhist Stele (Krannert Art Museum),” *The Burlington Magazine* 108/765 (December, 1966): 631.
69. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 52; for the Persian influences over Buddhist art, see also Patricia E. Karetzky, *Early Buddhist Narrative Art: Illustration of the Buddha from Central Asia to China, Korea and Japan* (Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 2000), 5–6.
70. Bhattacharya, “India—A Major Source of Central Asian Art,” 295.
71. Bhattacharya, “India—A Major Source of Central Asian Art,” 293.
72. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 57–59.
73. Sir Auriel Stein, “A ‘Persian Bodhisattva,’” *Studia Indo-Iranica, Ehregabe für Wilhelm Geiger*. (Leipzig, 1931), 267–271.
74. Guissepe Tucci, “Iran et Tibet,” *Acta Iranica* 1 (1974): 300.
75. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 51–52.
76. Karetzky, *Early Buddhist Narrative Art,* 5.
77. S. Turdy Kawami, “Kuh-e Khwaja, Iran, and Its Wall Paintings: The Records of Ernest Herzfeld,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 22 (1987): 21, 22, 50.
78. Soroor Ghanimati, “New Perspectives on the Chronological and Functional Horizons of Kuh-e Khwaja in Sistan,” *IBIPS* 38 (2000): 138, 140, 143.
79. Maurizio Taddei, “On the Śiva Image from Kūhah, Mesopotamia,” *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 31/4 (1971): 548–552.
80. A. Coomaraswamy, “Miniature from Turkish and Persian Books of Fables,” *Bulletin of Museum of Fine Arts* 26/157 (October, 1928): 89; Daniel Gimaret, “Traces et Parallèles du Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būdāsf dans la tradition arabe,” *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 24 (1971): 117–120.
81. Coomaraswamy, “Miniature from Turkish and Persian Books of Fables,” 90.
82. F. Mojtabai, “Dāstān-hāye Hindī dar Adabīyāt-i Fārsī,” in *Yekī Qatreh Bārān*, edited by Ahmad Taffazoli (Tehran, 1370/1991), 475–76.
83. Mojtabai, “Dāstān-hāye Hindī,”476–77, 482; Gimaret, “Traces et Parallèles,” 119; see also B. M. Pande, “Indian Religions and the West: Historical Perspective,” in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 620.
84. Tucci, “Iran et Tibet,” 301–305.
85. Tucci, “Iran et Tibet,” 302–303.
86. Scott, “The Iranian Face of Buddhism,” 70, 72.

87. Tucci, "Iran et Tibet," 303, 306.
88. Tucci, "Iran et Tibet," 304.
89. P. Schmidt, "Persian Dualism in the Far East," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 405–406. In this article Schmidt suggests for Chinese *Yin* (the forces of darkness) a pronounciation of *Yim,* which corresponds to *Yima*, another name for Ahriman—this cannot be coincidental.
90. Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 283, 286.
91. Dante may have been a direct beneficiary of these eastern eschatological formulations.
92. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Iran to Tibet," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 89–115.
93. Melikian-Chirvani, "Iran to Tibet," 90, 97–108; see also Mario Bussagli, "Bronze Objects Collected by Prof. G. Tucci in Tibet: A Short Survey of Religious and Magic Symbolism," *Artibus Asiae* 12/4 (1949): 338–39.
94. Raphael Israeli, "An Arabic Manuscript on China and Tibet," *Arabica* 39, Fasc. 2 (July, 1992): 214; Melikian-Chirvani, "Iran to Tibet," 93–95.
95. Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, "Islam and Tibet: Cultural Interactions—Introduction," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 3.
96. Melikian-Chirvani, "Iran to Tibet," 109–110.
97. Melikian-Chirvani, "Iran to Tibet," 111, 114.
98. Stein, "A 'Persian Bodhisattva,'" 271–273.
99. Gaulier et al., *Buddhism in Afghanistan*, 3; Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 959; Scott, "The Iranian Face of Buddhism," 48.
100. Annemarie Von Gabain, "Iranische Elemente im Zentral- und Ostasiatischen Volksglauben," *Studia Orientalia* 47 (1974): 57, 59.
101. Von Gabain, "Iranische Elemente," 58, 67–68.
102. Hans-Jaochim Klimkeit, "Buddhism in Turkish Central Asia," *Numen* 37 fasc.1 (June 1990): 58; see also Wolfgang Scharlipp, "Kurzer Überblick über die buddhistische Literatur der Türken," *Materialia Turcica* 6 (1980): 45.
103. Von Gabain, "Iranische Elemente," 59.
104. David Whitehouse, "Excavation at Sīrāf: Fifth Interim Report," *IBIPS* 10 (1972): 87.
105. David Whitehouse and Andrew Williamson, "Sasanian Maritime Trade," *IBIPS* 11 (1973): 43–45.
106. M. Ismail Marcinkowski, "The Iranian Siamese Connection: An Iranian Community in the Thai Kingdom of Ayuttahya," *Iranian Studies* 35/1–3 (Winter-Summer 2002): 23–46.
107. D. Sinor, "The Türk Empire (553–682)," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 3, edited by B. A. Litvinsky et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), 333.
108. Banerjee and Agrawala, "Hindu Sculptures in Ancient Afghanistan," 220.
109. Deborah Klimburg-Salter, "Buddhist Painting in the Hindu Kush ca. VIIth to Xth Centuries," in *Islamisation de l'Asie centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VII^{e} au XI^{e} siècle*, edited by Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 39, 2008), 140, 149.
110. Klimburg-Salter, "Buddhist Painting in the Hindu Kush," 138, 148, 155
111. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire," 60, quoting *Borhān-e Qāte.* The local people of Bāmiyān remember that the leg of one of the large Buddhas had been

partly knocked away by cannon-shot, either by the Indian monarch Aurangzeb in the seventeenth century (Takayasu Higuchi, Gina Barnes, "Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan," p. 300), or perhaps by the Iranian Nādir Shah in the eighteenth century (Talbot, et al., "The Rock-Cut Caves and Statues of Bamian," pp. 341, 348).

112. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 2, translated and edited by Bayard Dodge (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), 828–29.
113. André Wink, *Al-Hind- the Making of the Indo-Islamic World: Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam 7th–11th Centuries*, vol. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 126; Banerjee and Agrawala, "Hindu Sculptures in Ancient Afghanistan," 219.
114. Wink, *Al-Hind—the Making*, 124; see also C. E. Bosworth, "The Armies of the Saffārids," *BSOAS* 31/3 (1968): 551.
115. Abul Hassan Ali ibn Masʿudī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab*, vol.2 (Tehran, 1344/1965), 632–33; Wink, *Al-Hind—the Making*, 124.
116. Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 30.
117. F. B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *The Art Bulletin* 84/4 (December, 2002): 648; Flood, *Objects of Translation,* 37; see also Higuchi, Barnes, "Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan," 299; see also C. E. Bosworth, "The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids," *IBIPS* 6 (1968): 34.
118. M. L. Bhatia, "Identifying Buddhism in Early Islamic Sources of Sind," *Buddhist Studies Review* 19/2 (2002): 160, 164.
119. However, some Arab travelers in Sind referred to the Buddhists and Hindus as *dhimmī*, not *kāfir* (unbeliever) people: see Bhatia, "Identifying Buddhism," 162.
120. Flood, *Objects of Translation,* 38.
121. Ulrike Al-Khamis, "The Iconography of Early Islamic Lusterware from Mesopotamia: New Considerations," *Muqarnas* 7 (1990): 109.
122. Al-Khamis, "The Iconography," 109–110.
123. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture," 644.
124. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture," 644.
125. See Gina L. Barnes, "An Introduction to Buddhist Archaeology," *World Archaeology* 27/2 (October, 1995): 165–182.
126. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture," 646–649, see the pictures of the art works.
127. Riefstahl, "Persian Islamic Stucco Sculpture," 438.
128. Flood, *Objects of Translation,* 36.
129. Cf. Flood, *Objects of Translation,* 37.
130. Leonardo Olschki, "The Crib of Christ and the Bowl of Buddha," *JAOS* 70/3 (July—September, 1950): 164. The Buddha's alms bowl was first transferred to Iran.
131. T. Duka, "The Influences of Buddhism Upon Islam," *JRAS* (January 1904): 141. There are more holy relics in Khurāsān attributed to Mohammad that may have Buddhist origins. Notably, the hair of Mohammad kept in Gāzergāh in Herat is a reminder of the Buddha's hair being kept in Jalālābād and even in Balkh.
132. Mojtabai, "Dāstān-hāye Hindī," 476; Gimaret, "Traces et Parallèles," 119.
133. F. Mojtabai, *Nahv Hindī va Nahv ʿArabī* (Tehran: Nashr Karnameh, 1383/2004), 53, 56, 81–99, 156.

3 MĀNĪ, "THE BUDDHA OF LIGHT"

1. G. Haloun and W. B. Henning, "The Compendium of the Doctrines and Styles of the Teaching of Mānī, the Buddha of Light," *Asia Major* 3 (1953): 196–201.

2. W. Sundermann, "Mani, India and the Manichaean Religion," *South Asian Studies* 2 (1986): 15.
3. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 2, (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), 773. Ibn Nadīm states that she was of Arsacid (Ashkānid) stock. See also I. Scheftelowitz, "Stammt der Religionsstifter Māni aus dem iranischen Herrscherhaus der Arsakiden," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 403.
4. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,*vol. 2, 773–774; M. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 404; see also R. Bulliet, "Naw Bahar and the Survival of Iranian Buddhism," *IBIPS* 14 (1976):144.
5. Cf. M. Taddei, "On the Śiva Image from Kūhah, Mesopotamia," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 31/4 (1971): 548–552.
6. For this speculation cf. G. Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* (London, 1965), quoted in *Mānī be Ravāyat Ibn al-Nadim*, 69 (notes).
7. J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l'Iran Ancien*, (Paris, 1962), 273.
8. W. Sundermann, "How Zoroastrian Is Mani's Dualism?" *Manichaica Iranica*, vol.1, edited by C. Beck et al. (Rome: Instituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), 44, 54.
9. Cf. D. Scott, "Manichaean Responses to Zoroastrianism (Politico-Religious Controversies in Iran, Past to Present: 3)," *Religious Studies* 25/4 (December, 1989): 435–438, 442, 445.
10. M. Boyce, "On Mithra in Manichaean Pantheon," in *A Locust's Leg: Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, edited by W. B. Henning and E. Yarshater (London, 1962), 44–54; see also W. Lentz, "The 'Social Function' of the Old Iranian Mithra," 246, 253; Sundermann, "How Zoroastrian Is Mani's Dualism?" in *Henning Memorial Volume* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), 39–42.
11. Morony, *Iraq after*, 405; H. P. Hasenfratz, "Iran und der Dualismus," *Numen* 13 Fasc.1 (July, 1983): 38–39, 41.
12. Morony, *Iraq after,* 401.
13. François De Blois, "Dualism in Iranian and Christian Traditions," *JRAS* 10/1 (April, 2000): 2, 7–13.
14. R. Webb, "The Early Spread and Influence of Buddhism in Western Asia," *Buddhist Studies Review* 10/1 (1993): 64–65, 73, 76; N. N. Battacharyya, "India's Contribution to Islamic Thought and Culture," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 574; see also J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Consolation and a Parable," 518–528.
15. See D. Scott, "Christian Responses to Buddhism in pre-Medieval Times," *Numen* 32 Fasc. 1 (Jul., 1985): 88–90; see also W. Halbfass, "Early Indian References to the Greeks and the First Western References to Buddhism," in *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 1 (Göttingen, 1991), 204.
16. Halbfass, "Early Indian References to the Greeks," 206.
17. Mohammad ibn Abdul Karīm Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal,* vol.1, (Tehran, 1387/2008), 413; see also D. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," *History of Religion* 25/2 (November, 1985): 101.
18. S. Stoumsa and Gedaliahu G. Stoumsa, "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean Polemics in Late Antiquity and Under Early Islam," *The Harvard Theological Review* 81/1 (January, 1988): 42.
19. Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen im iranischen und türkischen Manichäismus," in *Synkretismus in den Religionen Zentralasiens*, edited by Walther Heissig and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 58.

20. H-J.Klimkeit, "Jesus' Entry into Parinirvāna Manichaean Identity in Buddhist Central Asia," *Numen* 33/2 (December, 1986): 225–226.
21. H-J Klimkeit, "Christians, Buddhists and Manichaeans in Medieval Central Asia," *Buddhist Christian Studies*1 (1981): 48–49.
22. Arthur Vööbus, "The Origin of Monasticism in Mesopotamia," *Church History* 20/4 (December, 1951): 33–35, 36.
23. Vööbus, "The Origin of Monasticism," 36.
24. Hasenfratz, "Iran und der Dualismus," 42.
25. Sundermann, "How Zoroastrian," 39. Similarly Mazdak (d. 528), a prophet who emerged three centuries after Mānī, revived dualism and criticized the injustice of the Zoroastrian social structure and its endemic economic gap between the poor and the rich. Thus Mānī's antimaterialism trickled into Mazdakī tradition and later into some other ascetic practices in Iran even though Mazdakism and, later its offshoot, Khuramdīniyya remained a Zoroastrian sect. See Biruni, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, 192; Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal*, vol.1, 423 quoting Isa ibn Warrāq saying Mazdak's doctrine matched that of Mānī's in its principle. See also De Blois, "Dualism in Iranian," 14.
26. For the description of the soul and baptizing in Mandean tradition see Mark Lidzbarski, "Das mandäische Seelenbuch," *ZDMG* 61 (1907): 689–698; Scheftelowitz, "Stammt der Religionsstifter," 404.
27. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London, 1908), 12–21. Iqbal states that at the time of Mānī, "...the Buddhistic Missionaries were beginning to preach Nirvāna to the country of Zoroaster," 13.
28. Sundermann, "Mani, India," 15.
29. *Alberuni's India*, vol. 1, 54–55.
30. P. Bryder, "Manichaeism iii: Buddhist Elements in," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2005, accessed July 2010.
31. A. V. W. Jackson, "The Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Manichaeism," *JAOS* 45 (1925): 247.
32. Jackson, "Doctrine of Metempsychosis,": 248–252, 261–268.
33. Morony, *Iraq after*, 405; Sundermann, "Mani, India," 11, 16; see also Vööbus, "The Origin of Monasticism," 35.
34. Willa Jane Tanabe, "Book Review of *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy* by Klimkeit," 167.
35. Klimkeit, "Jesus' Entry into Parinirvāna," 227.
36. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 102.
37. W. Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date of the Historical Buddha," in *Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, edited by Heinz Bechert, Part 1 (Göttingen, 1991), 429.
38. Biruni, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*,190. Almost the same thing is repeated in Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal,* vol.1, 418.
39. Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date," 430–431.
40. Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date," 432–435.
41. Sundermann, "Mani, India," 13.
42. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 103.
43. Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen," 61–63, 64.
44. Sundermann, "Mani, India," 16, 17.
45. Klimkeit, "Jesus' Entry into Parinirvāna," 235.
46. Bryder, "Manichaeism iii,"
47. Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen," 64.

48. Klimkeit, "Buddhistische Übernahmen," 69. In certain Parthian hymns, Jesus is also called one of the Buddhas, and in some Chinese hymns he is referred to as "Buddha Jesus," or "Jesus the Buddha"; see Franzmann, *Jesus in the Manichaean Writings* (London: T&T Clark Ltd., 2003), 29; see also Klimkeit, "Christians, Buddhists and Manichaeans," 49.
49. B. A. Litvinsky, "India and Soviet Central Asia," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture,* edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 270; see also Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 105.
50. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 106–108; see Duchesne-Guillemin, *La Religion de l'Iran Ancien,* 245; cf. Bryder, "Manichaeism iii,"
51. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 108–110; D. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism: Mahāyāna Reaffirmation of the 'Middle Path'?" *History of Religions* 35/2 (November, 1995): 156. See also Klaus Röhrborn, "Zur Terminologie der buddhistischen Sekundärüberlieferung in Zentralasien," *ZDMG* 133 (1983): 273–296.
52. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 109.
53. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism," 148–149.
54. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism," 152.
55. Scharlipp, "Kurzer Überblick," 41.
56. Haloun and Henning, "The Compendium," 191.
57. Haloun and Henning, "The Compendium," 190; Sundermann, "Manichaeism Meet Buddhism," *Manichaica Iranica*, vol.1, edited by C. Beck et al. (Rome: Instituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), 550. The legend of the Buddha being born from the side of a virgin mother and its similarity to Jesus's birth from a virgin mother was universally accepted by second-century Westerners like Terebinthus and Hieronymus; see B. M. Pande, "Indian Religions and the West: Historical Perspective," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 619.
58. Haloun and Henning, "The Compendium," 192.
59. Haloun and Henning, "The Compendium," 189.
60. *Arzhang* means "drawing" in Parthian: see Haloun and Henning, "The Compendium," 209–210.
61. Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 114.
62. Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, 286.
63. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism," 150–152.
64. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism," 154–155.
65. Scott, "Buddhist Responses to Manichaeism," 159–160.
66. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy*, translated by A. Isma'il-pour titled *Honar-i Mānavī*, (Tehran: Ostoore Publisher, 2005), 79–80, 82, 84, 219, 243.
67. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy*, 67, 218.
68. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy*, 73–75, 222–223, mentioning Jāhiz, who praises the fine calligraphy and art of *zindīq*, referring to the Manichaeans.
69. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy,* 68, 243, 246.
70. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy,* 220–221.
71. The use of the metaphor of the *sarv* or cypress tree as a symbol of the evergreen by the Persian poets may be an allusion to the old metaphor used by the adepts of Manichaean and Mazdaki doctrines The artistic pattern of the curved cypress (*boteh jegheh*) is believed to have occurred when with Mazdak's death the tip of

cypress was bent, signifying the temporary defeat. See T. Atrvash, *Boteh Jegheh Chist?* (Tehran, 1385/2006), 35, 74–77.

72. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy,* 58–60, 64, 248, 250, 262, 265.
73. H. W. Bailey, "The Word 'But' in Iranian," *BSOS* 6/2 (1931): 279–280; see also Sundermann, "Manichaean Traditions on the Date," 427–428.
74. De Vaux, B. Carra. "Budd," *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 1283; A. K. Coomaraswamy, "The Origin of the Buddha Image," *The Art Bulletin* 9/4 (June, 1927): 297.
75. De Vaux, "Budd," 1284.
76. *Farkhār* is another name for *Nawbahār,* or Buddhist monastery, such as the ones in Kabul, Badakhshān, and Taleqān as well as in Neishābūr.
77. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire," 34–35, 57; though moon is often attributed to *maitreya* (moon-faced Buddha), 20.
78. *Shaman* is an alternate term used for the Buddhist mendicant of Central Asia (*Shamaniyya* for Buddhism).
79. Morony, *Iraq after*, 407.
80. Stoumsa et al., "Aspects of Anti-Manichaean," 38.
81. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902), 162; Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 53; Moshe Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," in *Israel Oriental Studies XII*, edited by Joel L. Kraemer, (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 41.
82. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,*vol. 2, 784–785.
83. See W. Tucker, "Bayan b, Sam'an and the Bayaniyya: Shi'ite Extremists of Umayyad Iraq," *The Muslim World* LXV 4 (1975): 241–253.
84. F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 1992), 56–57, 66–67,68; Browne, *A Literary History of Persia,* 279.
85. See C. Colpe, "Anpassung des Manichäismus an den Islam," *ZDMG* 109 (1959): 82–91.
86. See J. Van Ess, "Die Kāmilīya- Zur Genese einer häresiographischen Tradition," *Die Welt des Islam* 28/1–4 (1988): 141–153.
87. Duka, "The Influences of Buddhism upon Islam," 129.
88. Massignon, "Zindik," *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, 659–660.
89. Sundermann, "Dīnāvarīya," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 1995.
90. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* 68.
91. P. Van Lindt, *The Names of Manichaean Mythological Figures: A Comparative Study on Terminology in the Coptic Sources*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 164.
92. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* 87–88, 195.
93. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* 294–295.
94. N. McClelland, *Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc. Publishers, 2010), 124. J. Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 77. The Druzes, another sect in the Middle East worthy of mention in connection with the Isma'ilī sect, also believe in reincarnation and consider the body to be the "shirt" and that as soon as one is dead one's soul will be restored to a newborn; see M. Hidayet Hosain, "The Druzes, Their Origin, Manners, and Customs," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 158; see also Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs,* 198, 200; Ian Stevenson, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1974), 271.

95. In parallel to Mānī's quest, there was a later attempt in the nineteenth century when Bahā'ullāh in Iran defied the old religious order as well as the barriers of geography and language; Baha'i doctrine accordingly embraces the nine major world prophets, including Mohammad and the Buddha (introduced by Bahā'ullāh's eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā'), as accepted apostles. See Scott, "Manichaean Views of Buddhism," 102. The analogy between the message and belief system presented by Abdul Baha and Zoroaster had been discussed by N. Martinovitch, "Zoroaster and Abdul Baha," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 293–295; P. Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130; P. Smith, "Manifestations of God," *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 231; see also M. Momen, *Buddhism and the Baha'i Faith: An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith for the Theravada Buddhists* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1995).

4 THE LEGENDARY STORY OF THE BUDDHA IN IRAN

1. F. Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," *Dā'erat ul-Mu'ārif Bozorg-i Islamī,* vol.12 (Tehran, 1383/2004), 531; see also F. Mojtabai, "Dāstānhāy-i Hindī dar Adabīyāt-i Fārsī," in *Yekī Qatreh Bārān*, edited by Ahmad Taffazoli (Tehran, 1370/1991),478; see also D. Scott, "Christian Responses to Buddhism in pre-Medieval Times," *Numen* 32 Fasc. 1 (July, 1985): 90.
2. W. Sundermann, "Die Bedeutung des Parthischen für die Verbreitung buddhistischer Wörter indischer Herkunft," in *Manichaica Iranica*, vol.1, edited by C. Beck et al. (Rome: Instituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), 170; H. W. Bailey, "The Word 'But' in Iranian," *BSOS* 6/2 (1931):282.
3. Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 532–533.
4. Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 535; –the speculation is whether the name *Bilawahr* originates from the Indian *Purohita* (used for the wise masters), which has been adapted to various pronunciations and languages and has changed to *Pulohira* and then in Arabic to *Biloher* and later to Bilawahr, etc. The penetration of the name *Bilawahr* as the spiritual guide of the Buddha, who is believed to have reached enlightenment without a master, may be a later addition to the earliest life story of the Buddha recorded.
5. R. Webb, "The Early Spread and Influence of Buddhism in Western Asia," *Buddhist Studies Review* 10/1 (1993): 59–60 quoting Rhys Davids; G. Vajda, "Die Zindīqs im Gebiet des Islam zu Beginn der 'Abbasidenzeit," in *Der Manichäismus*, edited by Geo Widengren (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlische Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 434; see also D. Gimaret, "Bouddha et les bouddhistes dans la tradition musulmane," *Journal Asiatique* 257 (1969): 313; A. Subut, "Buddha," *Danishnameh Jahan-i Islam*, (Tehran, 1377/1998), 499.
6. W. Sundermann, "Dīnāvarīya," in *Manichaica Iranica*, vol.1, edited by C. Beck et al. (Rome: Instituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), 533–536; this Manichaean community seems to have settled near Neishābūr and Samarqand.
7. D. Gimaret, *Le Livre de Bilawhar et Būdāsf: Selon la Version Arabe Ismaélienne*, (Geneve, Paris: Librairie Droz, 1971), 42.
8. Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 531.
9. W. B. Henning, "Persian Poetical Manuscripts from the Time of Rūdakī," in *A Locust's Leg. Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, edited by W. B. Henning and E. Yarshater (London, 1962), 89, 93; see also Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 6.

10. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,*vol. 2, translated and edited by Bayard Dodge (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), 717.
11. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 61; S. M. Stern and Sofie Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories in an Arabic Version* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, also by Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1971), 1.
12. Cf. Gimaret, "Traces et Parallèles du Kitāb Bilawhar wa Būdāsf dans la tradition Arabe," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 24 (1971): 132–133.
13. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,*vol.1, 260.
14. K. A. Fariq, "The Poetry of Abān al-Lāhiqī," *JRAS* 1/2 (April, 1952): 46.
15. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 61; Webb, "The Early Spread," 71; Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 534. The chapter appears in *Nihāyat al-Irab fi Akhbār al-Furs wal-'Arab* (a work of mythical history of Iran running parallel and close to *Shāhnāma*); see also E. G. Browne, "Some Account of the Arabic Work Entitled *Nihāyatu'l-irab fi Akhbāri'l-Furs wal-'Arab*, Particularly of That Part Which Treats of the Persian Kings," *JRAS* (1900): 216–217.
16. Browne, "Some Account of the Arabic Work Entitled," 217; see also book review of D. Lang by S. M. Stern, "The Wisdom of Balahvar: A Christian Legend of the Buddha," *BSOAS* 22 (1959): 151.
17. E. G. Pullyblank, "An Shih-Kao," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1984, accessed October 2010; see also B. N. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubishers, 1987), 214–215; see also Webb, "The Early Spread," 61.
18. Fariq, "The Poetry," 54.
19. F. Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam: Die Entwicklung zu al-Gazālīs Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktion der Philosophen,* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 85.
20. A. Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (NY: Routledge, 2001), 22.
21. Vajda, "Die Zindīqs,"445; see also Fariq, "The Poetry," 52–53, 54.
22. Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, "Das Weiterleben manichäischer Erzälstoffe im Islam," in *Studia Manichaica*, edited by Ronald E. Emmerick et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 368.
23. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 28; Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 12–14.
24. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 29 (notes).
25. S. H. Amin, *Bāztāb Ustoreh-i Buddha dar Iran va Islam,* (Tehran: Entesharat Mir Kasra, 1378/1999), 12–13.
26. C. Turner, *Islam without Allah: The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 149.
27. Turner, *Islam without Allah*, 150.
28. Two other fragmentary Arabic manuscripts of Halle and Cairo had come to light before the discovery of the Bombay version; see Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 2.
29. Stern and Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 1–2; Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 3.
30. Gimaret, "Bouddha et les bouddhistes," 282–286.
31. Gimaret, "A Propos de," *Arabica* 20, Fasc. 2 (June, 1973): 186–191.
32. *The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births,* edited by E. B. Cowell, vols. 5–6 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubishers, 1990), 68, 91.
33. Stern and Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 7.
34. *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, translated by Avery and Heath-Stubbs (Penguin Books, 1981), *rubā'i*s # 157 and # 216.
35. Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 28–38 (for the dialogues see 28–30).

36. Z. Matar, "The Buddha Legend: A Footnote from an Arabic Source Author(s)," *Oriens* 32 (1990): 440–442.
37. Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 3.
38. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the Near East, Asia and Africa 1325–1354*, translated and edited by Rev. Samuel Lee (New York: Dover Publications, 2004),185, mentions that the port of Salawat is in Serendīp (modern-day Sri Lanka).
39. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 11–24.
40. The convoluted connection between Budāsef and Kashmir has been confused with the connection of Jesus and Kashmir. This author has personally visited the alleged "tomb of Jesus" in Srinagar, Kashmir, where at the gate of the shrine is marked, "Ziarati Hazrati Youzaa Souph (The Holy Shrine of Youzaa Souph)." This place has been speculated by several theorists, for instance in the late 1800s hypothesis of Nicolas Notovich and later Holger Kersten's book *Jesus Lived in India* (1984), to be the tomb of Jesus. The Kashmiri local religious authorities have however rejected the hypothesis of Jesus and believe it to be the tomb of a Sufi saint. Given the Buddhist history of Kashmir and the heedless usage of the name "Youza Souph" or similarly "Yuzāsef" by the Islamic authors such as Ibn Babuya and Majlisī and its similar Christian appellation of "Joasaph or Iodasaph" the location in question in Srinagar may have been after all a former Buddhist stūpa, and has been erroneously alleged to be Jesus's tomb or a Sufi shrine especially after the Sufi settlements in Kashmir in post-fourteenth century.
41. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 30–31.
42. Amin, *Bāztāb,* 180.
43. This change in the first letter of the name of Budāsef to Yuzāsef is the basis of the Georgian, Latin, and other translations of the name to "Josaphat" or "Iodasaph."
44. Mullā Mohammad Bāqir Majlisī, *'Ayn al-Hayāt,* (Tehran, 1347/1968), 276–285.
45. This response is strikingly identical to when Bāyazīd Bastāmī, the mystic of the ninth century, was asked about his age, and he said I am only four years old since the other seventy years have been passed in not knowing the truth, see R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam,* (New York, 1907), 57.
46. The excerpt and paraphrased text is taken from Majlisī, *'Ayn al-Hayāt,* 276–341; an excerpt from *'Ayn al-Hayāt* of Majlisī also appears under the title *Biloher and Yoozasif* (Karachi: Peer Mohammad Ebrahim Trust, 1973). Furthermore, there are two separate publications of the excerpts of *Bilawahr va Budāsef* of Majlisī's *'Ayn al-Hayāt:* one is published in Tehran, 1280/1863 under supervision of Mirzā 'Ali Khoshnevīs, and the second one is published in Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1376/1997.
47. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 43–46; see also Amin, *Bāztāb*, 192–193.
48. Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 533.
49. T. Nöldeke, "As-Sabtī, der Sohn des Hārūn ar-Rašīd," *ZDMG* 43 (1889): 327–328; M. Schreiner, "As-Sabtī, der Sohn des Hārūn ar-Rašīd," *ZDMG* 45 (1891): 301–302, arguing whether this is a myth or a misreading of historical records.
50. Nöldeke, "As-Sabtī, der Sohn des Hārūn ar-Rašīd," 327; see also T. Duka, "The Influence of Buddhism Upon Islam," *JRAS* (January 1904): 133.
51. The Buddha legend may have exerted its influences on other pre-Islamic writings that either have themes similar to the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef* or have indirectly adapted parts of the story. Under the Sasanids, the book *Eternal Wisdom* (*Jāvidān Khirad*), under the title *Ādāb-i Būzarjūmihr,* authored around the sixth century and translated into Arabic in the Islamic period, possibly by Ibn al-Muqaffa', contained certain Buddhist themes about the impermanence of the world, and about advising and counseling (*pand o andarz),* as well as questions and answers similarly reflected

in the dialogues recounted in the book of *Bilawahr wa Budāsef.* See Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 39–41.

52. D. M. Lang, "Parable and Percept in the Marzubān Nāme*,"* in *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume,* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), 233–235; see also M. T. Houtsma, "Eine unbekannte Bearbeitung des Marzban-nameh," *ZDMG* 52 (1898): 359–392, for a detailed analysis of the story that appears in different versions.
53. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902), 478.
54. Lang, "Parable," 233.
55. Lang, "Parable," 236–237.
56. Excerpt from *Āieen Rahrovī*, *Farā'id al-Sūlūk* by Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm Shams Sajjāsī, edited by Alireza Zakavati Qaraguzloo (Tehran: Ahle Qalam, 1382/2003), 135–140.
57. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 36; see also Mojtabai, "Beloher va Budāsaf," 532, 533–534. Gimaret believes there is however a possibility that al-Ghazzālī in his *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat* had taken the story from *Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Safā;* see Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 37–38.
58. A. Halabi, *Gozīdeh Rasā'il Ikhwān as-Safā* (Tehran: Entesharat Asātir, 1380/2001), 118–120.
59. Browne, *A Literary,* 379; later on, ideas and books of the *Ikhwān as-Safā* were taken to Moorish Spain. It may be relevant that the idea of Unity of Existence (*wahdat ul-wūjūd*) developed by the Moorish theosopher Ibn 'Arabī (d.1240) was inspired by the treatises of *Ikhwān as-Safā* expounding on the idea that plurality evolves from unity and that plurality eventually returns to unity. See also Halabi, *Gozīdeh*, 43, 68.
60. Halabi, *Gozīdeh*, 162, 61, 67, 87–88, 159, 167, 192–193, 274.
61. C. Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga in the 'Amrtakunda' Translations," *JRAS* 13/2 (July, 2003): 213–215; see also references made about the Indian tales of wisdom, Halabi, *Gozīdeh*, 288–293.
62. Mulla Sadrā, *Asfār al-'Arba'a* (Tehran: Entesharat Mola, 1388/2009),10; Cf. J. Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among Daudi Bohras* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 171; S. Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im Zwölferschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhuderts,* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 217.
63. Abu H. Ghazzālī, *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat*, vol.2 (Tehran, 1354/1975), 527–568, 543.
64. Ghazzālī, *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat*, vol.2, 546.
65. Ghazzālī, *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat*, vol.2, 42. Such *hadīths* on asceticism stem from the early Sufi hagiographer, Sulamī (d.1020).
66. Ghazzālī, *Kimiyā-i Sa'ādat*, vol.2, 434.
67. For the earliest analysis of Ghazzālī's *Ihyā ul-'ulūm,* see Dr. Hitzig, "Ueber Ghazzālī's *Ihyā 'ulūm al-dīn," ZDMG* 7 (1853): 172–186.
68. Rhys Davids, "Does Al Ghazzālī Use an Indian Metaphor?" *JRAS* (January, 1911): 200–201; see also A. Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 3/3–4 (Summer-Autumn, 1970):185.
69. Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 1–14; I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen Über den Islam,* (Heidelberg, 1910), 161; Duka, "The Influence," 129.
70. Sundermann, "Die Bedeutung,"167–168.
71. Webb, "The Early Spread," 71–72 (notes); Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 51–52; Stern, Walzer, *Three Unknown Buddhist Stories,* 1.
72. J. P. Asmussen, "Barlaam and Iosaph," *Encyclopedia Iranica,* 1988, accessed July 2010*;* Stern,"The Wisdom of Balahvar: A Christian Legend of the Buddha," 151.

73. Detailed analysis of the Christian version to be found in Lang, *The Wisdom of Balahvar: A Christian Legend of the Buddha*, (London: Allen & Unwin, NY: Macmillan, 1957).
74. P. Almond, "The Buddha of Christendom: A Review of the Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat," *Religious Studies* 23/3 (September, 1987): 391. It is mentioned that Tolstoy was very much influenced by the legend during his mid-life, which led to his renunciation of worldly materials (notes, 391).
75. Gimaret, *Le Livre,* 27, 47.
76. L. Olschki, "The Crib of Christ and the Bowl of Buddha," *JAOS* 70/3 (July-September, 1950): 161–164.
77. S. Nafīcy, *Sar Cheshme-ye Tasawwuf dar Iran* (Tehran: Foroughi, 1343/1964), 14.
78. Amin, *Bāztāb,* 192–215.
79. Gimaret, "Traces," 105, 111, 131–132.
80. Gauthiot was the professor of Soghdian and Iranian Studies who deciphered many Soghdian documents discovered in Central Asia and China, see S. Lévi, "Central Asian Studies," *JRAS* (October, 1914): 956–957.
81. I. Gershevitch, "On the Soghdian Vassantara Jātaka," *JRAS* 2 (April, 1942): 97–101.
82. Badr ul-Zamān Gharīb, *Ravāyatī az Tavalod-i Buddha: Matn-i Soghdī Vassantara Jātaka* (Tehran: Ostoore Publisher, 1383/2004).
83. S. Ghose, *Legend of Ram: Antiquity to Janmabhumi Debate* (Delhi: Bibliophile South Asia, 2004), 141, it shows the authors of *Vassantara jātaka* were familiar with the legend of Ram in *Rāmāyana* due to its certain similarities. Gombrich also argues that the story of Prince Vassantara is a direct borrowing from the Book of *Rāmāyana* by drawing parallels during the time when Rāma was in exile. The Hindu and Buddhist contrast of the two stories is in its ethical considerations. See R. Gombrich, "The Vassantara Jātaka, the Rāmāyana and the Dasaratha Jātaka," *JAOS* 105/3 (July-September, 1985): 427–437.
84. Ananda is advised by the Buddha before his death regarding the future of the Order; see D. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*, (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976), 93, 114.
85. R. Gauthiot, "Une version soghdienne du Vassantara Jataka," *Journal Asiatique* (in two separate articles; janviér-fevriér/mai-juin 1912), 163–193, 429–510.
86. Gharīb, *Ravāyatī az Tavalod-i Buddha*.
87. Gauthiot mentions the elephant with six invaluable qualities; see Gauthiot, "Une version soghdienne du Vassantara Jataka," 174.

5 *QADAMGĀH* (HOLY FOOTPRINTS) AND MONASTIC CAVES IN IRAN

1. An example of a footprint can be found in Kabul, in Karte Sakhi near Kabul University, which the Hazara Shi'i community call it *Nazargāh*—a place where it is believed 'Ali once performed his prayers, and where the impression of his feet appeared on a stone. The archaeology department of Kabul University believes the site in question was once a Buddhist monastery and has asked for permission to excavate certain areas of this site, which has been declined by the shrine's authorities. (I visited this site in the spring of 2010.)
2. J. Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, translated into Persian (Tehran: Farhang Mo'aser, 2004), 232.

3. J. N. Kinnard, "The Polyvalent Pādas of Viṣnu and the Buddha," *History of Religion* 40/1(August, 2000): 49.
4. Kinnard, "The Polyvalent," 36, 40.
5. K. Malalgoda, "Millennialism in Relations to Buddhism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 12/4 (October, 1970): 432–433.
6. Kinnard, "The Polyvalent," 57.
7. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the Near East, Asia and Africa 1325–1354*, translated and edited by Rev. Samuel Lee (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), 183, 189, 191.
8. Muslim historians as well as Ibn Battuta in his travel narratives refer to Serendīp or Serendīb. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta,* 183. It is believed the English language word *serendipity* (making fortunate discoveries by accident) may have stemmed from the Persian tale of *The Three Princes of Serendīp.* See *The American Heritage Dictionary*. See also Geng Shimin, Hans Joachim-Klimkeit, Jens Peter Laut, "Die Geschichte der drei Prinzen: Weitere neue manichäische-türkische Fragments aus Turfan," *ZDMG*, 139 (1989): 329–345.
9. Abul Hassan Mas'udī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab*, vol.1 (Tehran, 1344/1965), 25.
10. Muhammad A. K. Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal,* vol.2 (Tehran, 1387/2008), 374.
11. H. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub* (Tehran, 1336/1957), 2–3.
12. S. Paranavitana, "The God of Adam's Peak," *Artibus Asiae* 18 (1958): 12.
13. Paranavitana, "The God," 22, Sumana at times in Pali and Sinhalese literature and *jātakas* is synonymous with deity, Yama (the counterpart of Yima in Iranian mythology), 33.
14. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh* (Tehran, 1384/2005), 111.
15. P. Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr*: *Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 231, 233.
16. See S. G. Yāhosseini, *Sīrāf Shahr-i Goft-o-Goye Farhang-hā* (Bushir: Entesharat Shoro', 1384/2005), 93–95. Sulaymān's geographical travel account became the source for future geographers such as Ibn al-Faqīh.
17. Paranavitana, "The God," 20, 16.
18. Yāhosseini, *Sīrāf,* 93–94, 229. In the mid-ninth century they would try to claim that Noah, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad were the prophets of India and China as well, since they assumed that average Muslims were illiterate and had no knowledge about Lao Tzu, Confucius, or the Buddha. See Yāhosseini, *Sīrāf,* 149–150. The book of *Akhbār al-Cīn wal-Hind* was initiated by Sulaymān and completed by Abu Zayd Sīrāfī; later additions were made by Shahriyār Rām-hurmuzī, whose book was titled *'Ajāyib al-Hind* (ca. 953). All of these became references and sources for slanted information about Ceylon, India, and China.
19. Paranavitana, "The God," 54, 72.
20. Paranavitana, "The God," 74.
21. Nāsir Khosrau, *Safar Nāmeh* (Tehran, 1344/1965), 88, 99; see also R. Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of Abraham-Ishmael Legend in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 212 (notes).
22. Ibn al- Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, edited by M. J. de Goeje, (Brill, 1885), 322–324.
23. Yāqūt Hamawī, *Kitāb Mu'jam al-Buldān,* vol. 2 (Tehran, 1965), 818.
24. B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics and Territory in Islam* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 78–79.
25. P. Hasan, "The Footprint of the Prophet," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 335.
26. Hasan, "The Footprint," 337, 339–341.
27. Cf. Kinnard, "The Polyvalent," 56.

28. Kinnard, "The Polyvalent," 57.
29. W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, translated by Svat Soucek, edited with an introduction by C. E. Bosworth, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 44, 50, 98–99.
30. M. H. Pāpolī Yazdī, *Farhang-e Ābādī-hā va Makān-hā-ye Mazhabī-ye Keshvar* (Tehran: Gorūh-e Joghrāfiyā, 1388/2009), see s.v. *'qadamgāh'*.
31. Pāpolī Yazdī, *Farhang*, see s.v. *'qadamgāh'*, 393.
32. L. Adamec (ed.), *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 1 (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 507.
33. Pāpolī Yazdī, *Farhang*, 636–638. There are a number of other religious sites called *gozargāh* (passageway) in and around Jeeroft, Kermān, and Bam whose origin cannot be determined, but these sites do interestingly make the Kermān region the crossroad of many religious events. See 638.
34. B. Spuler, *Iran in Früh-Islamischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1952), see the map for Jeeroft's Buddhist settlements. For Jeeroft's trade with India in ancient times see W. H. Siddiqi "India's Contribution to Arab Civilization," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 581.
35. Mas'udī, *Mūrūj*, vol.1, 588.
36. A. Krasnowolska, "Ḵezr," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 2009, accessed in April 2010; mentions only one *qadamgāh* in Jeeroft. Pāpolī Yazdī, *Farhang*, 637.
37. Franke, *Begegnung*, 2, 60, 65–66.
38. A. Rippin, "Khidr," *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion*, edited by Ian Richard Netton, (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 348.
39. A. J. Wensinck, "Khadir or Khidr," *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (Boston/Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 232–235.
40. See A. H. Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 3/3–4 *Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective* (Summer–Autumn, 1970): 196.
41. Franke, *Begegnung*, 293–296, 175–264.
42. Abul Hassan Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, translated and edited by Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore Edition: Zaki Enterprises, 2002), 103–105.
43. Franke, *Begegnung,* 237–239. Uwaysi adherents do not follow a particular master of their generation but rather receive their inspiration from Khidr.
44. M. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 144–145, quoting S. H. Nasr.
45. Franke, *Begegnung*, 294–297.
46. Shahristānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal,* vol. 2, 431. Birunī, however, provides different opinions of his contemporaries who consider Hermes to be identical with Buddha (Būdāsef): see Biruni's *al-Āthār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-khāliya*, 188.
47. Franke, *Begegnung,* 57–58.
48. S. H. Yusuf, "Buddha in the Qu'rān," in *Common Ground Between Islam and Buddhism* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010), 121.
49. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta,* 183.
50. There are number of common words between New Persian and the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka—an indication of cultural exchanges between the two countries during the high maritime trade.
51. A. Iqtidārī, *Āsār-i Shahr-haye Bāstāni: Savāhel va jazāyer Khalīj Fārs va Daryā-ye Oman* (Tehran: Anjoman Asar Mafakher Farhangi, 1996), 55,166. In the last two

decades apparently there has been a cave on a hilltop near the city of Qum where a mystic (by the name Shaykh Mojtahedī) had made claims to be in touch with Khidr. After his death of the Shaykh a small mosque was erected on top of the hill for the pilgrims called *Kuh-i Khidr*. A *hadīth* was written on a sign mentioning Khidr being the eternal companion of the twelfth or Hidden Imam. (I am indebted to my friend, Dr. Denis Hermann and his colleague in Iran to provide this account in 2011.)

52. Krasnowolska, "K̲ezr," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
53. Franke, *Begegnung,* 104 (see notes).
54. There are *qadamgāhs* of ʿAli (near the airport), and another to ʿAli's son Abūl Fazl, locally known as Abbās-ʿAli: see Iqtidārī, *Āsār*, 167–169.
55. Cf. S. R. Rao, "Shipping in Ancient India," 92; L. Gopal, "Indian Shipping in Early Medieval Period," 114; both in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970).
56. Iqtidārī, *Āsār*, 55, 166, 167.
57. Pāpolī Yazdī, *Farhang*, 637.
58. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub*, 131, tells us about the presence of at least one Indian place in Khuzistan—an indication that Hindu-Buddhist communities may have settled in Khuzistan and southern Iran and Iraq throughout the ages via the Persian Gulf trade.
59. J. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā-ye Tārīkhī-i Hejrat Imām Rezā az Madineh tā Marv* (Mashad: Āstān Qūds Razavī Publications, 1387/2008), 62–64.
60. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 64.
61. Buyids were Zaydi Shiʿi who believed in five Imams but as time went by they became more and more identified as Imamis.
62. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 104.
63. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 109.
64. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 110.
65. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 111–112.
66. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab,* vol.1, 589–591.
67. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang*, 636.
68. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 133.
69. T. Atrvash, *Boteh Jegheh Chist?* (Tehran: Mo'assesseh Farhangi, 1385/2006), 35, 74–77.
70. In one *Jatāka* the Buddha is incarnated as a golden gazelle.
71. S. Gaulier et al., *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia* (Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1976), 18–19.
72. E. Holland, *The Story of the Buddha* (Delhi: Asian Educational Series, 2003), 110; see also P. Bigandet, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha of the Burmese*, vol.2, (London, 1880), 161.
73. K. N. Dikshit, "Buddhist Centers in Afghanistan," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 235.
74. A. A. Dehkhoda, *Loghat Nameh,* s.v. 'botkadeh'. *Farkhār* is a Soghdian word meaning Buddhist temple
75. Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary*, 71.
76. Erfan-Manesh, *Jogrāphiyā*, 116.
77. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer*, vol. 1, 20–21.

78. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer*, vol. 1, 21. Āhogān is also mentioned to be the name of small range of hills on the road to Mīnāb, see Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer*, vol. 4, 7. There is another village called Āho-bam in Khurāsān on the road between Yazd and Neishābur, see Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer*, vol. 2, 13.
79. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of Eastern Caliphate* (London, 1966), 366, quoting Mostufī's *Nodhat ul-Qulub.*
80. M. Sullivan, *The Birth of Landscape Painting in China*, vol. 2 (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962),145.
81. A. C. Soper, "Aspects of Light Symbolism in Gandhāran Sculpture," *Artibus Asiae* 13/1–2 (1950): 63–64.
82. Soper, "Aspects of Light," 67–69, 72.
83. Soper, "Aspects of Light," 65–66.
84. D. C. Gladney, "Central Asia and China: Transnationalization, Islamization and Ethnicization," in *The Oxford History of Islam*, edited by John Esposito (New York:Oxford University Press, 1999), 440.
85. S. Mizuno (ed.), *Haibak and Kashmir-Smat: Buddhist Caves Temples in Afghanistan and Pakistan Surveyed in 1960* (Kyoto University, 1962); see also Dikshit, "Buddhist Centers in Afghanistan," 236; W. Simpson, "The Buddhist Caves of Afghanistan," *JRAS* 14/4 (October, 1882): 319–331.
86. M. G. Talbot et al."The Rock-Cut Caves and Statues of Bamian," *JRAS* 18/3 (July, 1886): 332–333.
87. T. Higuchi and G. Barnes, "Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan," *World Archaeology* 27/2 Buddhist Archaeology (October, 1995): 282, 296; Talbot, et al., "The Rock-Cut," 333, 348–349.
88. *Rasadkhaneh* means "observatory," a project undertaken by the Mongol minister and astronomer Nasīr al-Din Tūsī. Rasadkhāneh is 5 kilometers northwest of the modern city of Marāgheh.
89. P. Varjāvand, "Emāmazāda ii: Forms, Decorations, and Other Characteristics," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* accessed May 2010; Arezou Azad, "Three Rock-Cut Cave Sites in Iran and Their Ilkhanid Buddhist Aspects Reconsidered," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 219–221 (see also footnote 43).
90. Azad, "Three Rock-Cut," 215–219.
91. W. Ball, "How Far Did Buddhism Spread West," *Al-Rāfidān* 10 (1989): 8.
92. Barthold, *An Historical Geography*, 215.
93. W. Ball, "Two Aspects of Iranian Buddhism," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute of Pahlavi University* 1–4 (1976): 141.
94. Ball, "Two Aspects," 129–133, 138.
95. Ball, "Two Aspects," 137–138.
96. Azad, "Three Rock-Cut," 222.
97. H. W. Bailey, "Iranica," *BSOAS* 11/1 (1943): 1–5.
98. W. Ball, "Some Rock-cut Monuments in Southern Iran," *IBIPS* 24 (1986): 108–109; Ball, "Two Aspects," 106–113.
99. Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 109.
100. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 233
101. Ball, "Two Aspects," 112–113.
102. Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 108; Ball, "Two Aspects," 123.
103. Ball and Whitehouse, "Qal'at Haidarī," 149.
104. Ball, "Some Rock-cut Monuments in Southern Iran," 95.

105. W. Ball and D. Whitehouse, "Qal'at Haidarī," *IBIPS* 14 (1976): 150; Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 112.
106. Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 112.
107. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 243.
108. L. Bier, "The Masjid-i Sang Near Dārāb and the Mosque of Shahr-i Īj: Rock-cut Architecture of the Il-Khan Period," *IBIPS* 24 (1986): 122.
109. Whitehouse and Williamson, "Sasanian Maritime Trade," 29–49.
110. Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 106; Ball, "Two Aspects," 120–121; Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 361,370, 406–408 (Iqtidārī reports as if there are two sets of caves around Sīrāf and Bandar Tāherī).
111. Some local people call it Butāneh, a corrupt form of Butkhāna.
112. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 309.
113. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 420–426.
114. Rao, "Shipping in Ancient India," 92; Gopal, "Indian Shipping in Early Medieval Period," 104.
115. Barthold, *An Historical Geography*, 160.
116. H. Rawlinson, "Notes on the Ancient Geography of Mohamrah and the Vicinity," in *Studies on the Geography of Islamic Countries by Henry Rawlinson*, edited by Fuat Sezgin, (Frankfurt, 1997), 256.
117. N. Shaikh, "Indus-Gulf Relations: A Reassessment in the Light of New Evidence," in *The Silk Road: The Highways of Cultures and Commerce*, edited by Vadime Elisseeff (UNESCO: Berghahn Books, 2000), 81–92.
118. J. Elverkog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 32.
119. Whitehouse, "Excavation at Sīrāf," 87.
120. J. Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 289.
121. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 647–657.
122. Barthold, *An Historical Geography,* 146.
123. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 473.
124. Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 112.
125. G. Scarcia, "The Vihār of Qonqor-Olong: Preliminary Report," *East and West* 25/1–2 (1975): 99.
126. Scarcia, "The Vihār," 99.
127. There is another village named Vīār located near Hamadān. See Scarcia, "The Vihār," 100.
128. Azad, "Three Rock-Cut," 227.
129. Scarcia, "The Vihār," 101; See also M. T. Sajjadi, *Tārīkh va Joghrāphiā-ye Tārīkhī-i Rāmsar* (Tehran: Entesharat Mo'in, 1378/1999), 331, 335.
130. M. Salāhi, *Qār-haye Iran* (Tehran: Sedā Publications, 1378/1999), 112–117.
131. Salāhi, *Qār-haye Iran*,118–121.
132. Ball, "Two Aspects," 143: see editorial note. See also Ball, "Some Rock-cut," 115 (footnote 96).
133. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta,* 64.

6 Nawbahār and Stūpa-Like Islamic Shrines

1. P. K. Acharya, "Indo-Persian Architecture," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry*, (London, 1933), 4; see also H. Schaefer, "Two Gandhāran Temples and Their Near Eastern Sources," *JAOS* 62/1 (March, 1942): 61, 65, 67.

2. M. Mallowan, "An Early Mesopotamian Link with India," *JRAS* 2 (1970): 192–194.
3. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire du bouddhisme dans l'Iran musulman," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 2 (1974): 11 (notes).
4. Yāqūt Hamawī, *Kitāb Muʿjam al-Buldān,* vol. 2 (Tehran, 1965), 818.
5. C. J. Brunner, "The Middle Persian Inscription of the Priest Kirdēr at Naqš-i Rustam," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1974), 108–109; P. Gignoux, "Les quatre Inscriptions du Mage Kirdīr," *Studia Iranica* Cahier 9 (1991): 69–70; see also R. E. Emmerick, "Buddhism, I. In Pre-Islamic Times," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), 493.
6. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, translated from the Chinese of Hiuen-tsiang, C.E. 629 by Samuel Beal (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Cooperation, 1969), 44–45; S. H. Wriggins, *The Silk Road Journey with Xuanzang* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004),41; W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography*, 15; Emmerick, "Buddhism among Iranian Peoples," 953.
7. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab* vol.1, (Tehran, 1344/1965), 589.
8. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol.1, 589–591.
9. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol 1, 611; Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, vol.2, 377–378. Shahrastānī makes no mention of the Damascus and Mecca temples.
10. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, edited by M. J. de Goeje (Brill, 1885), 322–323.
11. *Hūdūd al-ʿĀlam min al-Mashriq ala al-Maghrib,* A Persian Geography (982 C.E.), translated and commented by V. Minorsky (London, 1937), 337.
12. An ancient unit; each cubit is equal to 46–48 centimeters.
13. E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902), 257–258.
14. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb*, 322–324.
15. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab*. vol.1, 589–590.
16. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Buddhist Ritual in the Literature of Early Islamic Iran," *South Asian Archeology*, 1981, Sixth International Conference of South Asian Archeologists in W. Europe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 275; see also Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire," 16.
17. G. R. Hawting, "'We Are Not Ordered With Entering It But Only With Circumambulating It.' "Hadīth" and "Fiqh" on Entering the Kaʿba," *BSAOS* 47/2 (1984): 228–242, especially 233, 241 (notes).
18. Atā Malik ibn Mohammad Juvaynī, *Tārīkh-i Jahān Goshā Juvaynī* (Tehran: Entesharat Hermes, 2008), 208.
19. See S. M. Yusuf, "The Early Contacts between Islam and Buddhism," *University of Ceylon Review* 13/1 (January, 1955): 21; see also P. Schwarz, "Bemerkungen zu den arabischen Nachrichten über Balkh," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 440–441.
20. Cf. W. Barthold, "Der Iranische Buddhismus und sein Verhältnis zum Islam," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, 1933), 29.
21. Cf. Schwarz, "Bemerkungen," 443.
22. See the study of C. E. Bosworth, "Abū Hafs ʿUmar Kirmānī and the Rise of the Barmakids," *BSOAS* 57/2 (1994): 268–282.
23. Bosworth, "Abū Hafs," 269–270.
24. K. Van Bladel, "The Bactrian Background of the Barmakids," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 61.

25. Van Bladel, “The Bactrian,” 64, quoting Ibn al-Faqīh.
26. G. R. D. King, “The Paintings of the Pre-Islamic Ka’ba,” *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 219.
27. King, “The Paintings,” 219–220; Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol.1, 627.
28. Shahrastānī, *al-Milal,* vol.2, 375; Masʿudī, *Mūrūj*, vol.1, p.589.
29. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi’ al-Tawārīkh,*163.
30. C. Tortel, *L’Ascète et le Bouffon: qalandars, vrai ou faux renonçants en islam ou l’Orient indianisé*, (Arles: Actes Sud, 2009), 118 (the original copy of the miniature is kept in the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin).
31. Shahrastānī, *al-Milal*, vol 2, 383–385.
32. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj*, vol.1, 589, also mentions that the Quraysh’s religion before Islam was similar to Buddhism (*Śamaniya*) of Central Asia and China, 133.
33. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol.1, 486.
34. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol.1, 627.
35. P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam,* (NJ: Gorgias Press LLC, 2004), 168–169.
36. Y. Friedmann, “Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions,” *JAOS* 95/2 (April-June, 1975): 214, quoting Tabari’s *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk.*
37. Nāsir Khosrau, *Safar Nāmeh,* 101.
38. Cf. Rao, “Shipping in Ancient India,” 92; Gopal, “Indian Shipping in Early Medieval Period,” 114; see also Webb, “The Early Spread,” 66.
39. Siddiqi, “India’s Contribution to Arab Civilization,” 586; see also Bhattacharyya, “India’s Contribution to Islamic Thought and Culture,” 574.
40. Cf. Siddiqi “India’s Contribution to Arab Civilization,” 586–588; see also B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics and Territory in Islam*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 64–67, 72. One of the reasons for the anti-clockwise circumambulation by the Muslim pilgrims could be that in earlier times it was changed in order to make it more distinct from the Buddhist ritual. (The followers of the Tibetan Bön doctrine circumambulate around the stūpa in anti-clockwise fashion.)
41. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden,* 64.
42. Ibn al-Faqih, *Kitāb,* 322.
43. Bailey, “Iranica,” 1–5.
44. Harmatta, “Tokharistan and Gandhara under Western Türk Rule (650–750): Part I History of the Region,” in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol.3, edited by B. A. Litvinsky et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), 371.
45. Van Bladel, “The Bactrian,” 66.
46. It was after the full capture of Khurāsān and Central Asia that Khālid and several other hostages were brought to the Umayyad capital in Syria during the time of the Caliph Hishām b. Abdul-Mālik (724–743), see Van Bladel, “The Bactrian,” 30.
47. Van Bladel, “The Bactrian,” 74–86.
48. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol. 1, 589.
49. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol. 2, 372–373, 376–379, 383; see also J. Scott Meisami, “Masʿudī on Love and the Fall of the Barmakids,” *JRAS* 2 (1989): 252–277 (see especially 258–262, 268–270).
50. Barthold, *An Historical Geography,* 20.
51. Barthold, “Der Iranische Buddhismus,” 31. Cf. J. Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 51.
52. Melikian-Chirvani, “Buddhism: in Islamic Times,” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), 497, quoting Asfezāri’s account.

53. Ibn Huwqal, *Kitāb Masālik wa Mamālik*, Sir William Ouseley (London, 1800), 223, 252.
54. R. Bulliet, "Naw Bahar and the Survival of Iranian Buddhism," *IBIPS* 14 (1976):140.
55. Juvaynī, *Tārīkh-i Jahān Goshā Juvaynī*, 182.
56. Bulliet, "Naw Bahar," 141; Melikian-Chirvani, "Buddhism: in Islamic Times," 497; Melikian-Chirvani, "The Buddhist Ritual in the Literature of Early Islamic Iran," 272–273, mentions that there are more than ten villages around Neishābur and Mashhad called *Nawbahār*.
57. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* s.v. "naw bahār."
58. H. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub*, (Tehran, 1336/1957), 127, reports of one Bahar in Kurdistan that was a fortress.
59. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of Eastern Caliphate* (London, 1966), 193 (for Seerjān, 311).
60. L. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 1, (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1976), 482.
61. M.H. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang Ābādī-hā va Makān-hāye Mazhabī Keshvar,* (Tehran: Gorūh-e Joghrāfiyā, Bonyād-e Pazhūhesh-hā-ye Eslāmī, 1388/2009), s.v. "naw bahār."
62. About this excavation there are two websites but unfortunately nothing, at least to my knowledge, is yet available in print form. The head of the Iranian excavation is Mr. Hamid Fahimi. (http://www.chn.ir/en/news/?section=2&id=6226, and http://www.cais-soas.com/News/2006/March2006/04–03-remnants.htm).
63. S. H. Amin, *Bāztāb Ustoreh-i Buddha dar Iran va Islam,* (Tehran: Entesharat Mir Kasra, 1378/1999), 120. The *pir* is believed to be the descendent of Kumail ibn Ziyad Nakhai'i; furthermore the spiritual origin of the site is believed to be a Sufi sect known as *Nurbakhshiya*.
64. Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 2, 75. The village about 50 kilometers east of Beerjand is called Bīhār.
65. Il-Khānid Arghūn began the construction of a Buddhist monastery in Qūchān that was completed by Ghazan Khan. See Ball, "Two Aspects of Iranian Buddhism," 141.
66. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "bahār." See also Adamec, *Historical Gazetteer of Iran*, vol. 3, 74–75.
67. R. Frye, "Notes on the History of Architecture in Afghanistan," *Ars Islamica* 11/12 (1946): 201 (notes).
68. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* see *farkhār*, Dehkhodā quotes Minorsky who disagrees that *farkhār* has anything to do with Sanskrit *vihāra*. See also Melikian-Chirvani, "The Buddhist Ritual in the Literature of Early Islamic Iran," 272–273.
69. *Hūdūd al-'Ālam,* 263.
70. Birunī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-khāliya* (*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*), translated and edited by Edward Sachau (London, 1879),188; Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub*, 10.
71. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire," 38–39, 41–44.
72. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* s.v. "farkhār."
73. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* s.v. "farkhār." The village of Farkhārān is not mentioned in Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang*; however, three other villages are mentioned by the names of Farkhān Bālā, Farkhān Pāyeen, Farkhān Khardoo, as well as Farkhān Shāhrāh. All four villages are in the Qūchān district (Farkhān can be an altered

pronunciation of the original Farkhār)—and Qūchān is where the Il-Khānids built a Buddhist monastery.

74. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* s.v."nawshād."
75. Dehkhodā, *Loghat Nāmeh,* s.v. "nawshād," quoting Mojtaba Minavi's *Fazā'il Balkh.*
76. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "nawshād."
77. Two poets, Nizāmī and Adīb Sābir, have composed poems using *nawbahār* and *qandahār* for idol temple in the same verse in a poetical game of words.
78. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "qandahar."
79. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire," 64.
80. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "botan," 110.
81. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "budd" 110.
82. Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang,* s.v. "barmak," p. 98.
83. Varjāvand, "Emāmzāda iii: Number, Distribution, and Important Examples," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* accessed May 2010.
84. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Buddhist Ritual in the Literature of Early Islamic Iran," 9, quoting Sorouri's *Majma' ul-Fūrs.*
85. W. Sundermann, "Mani, India and the Manichaean Religion," *South Asian Studies* 2 (1986): 16.
86. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran,* 146.
87. A. Iqtidārī, *Āsār-i Shahr-haye Bāstāni: Savāhel va jazāyer Khalīj Fārs va Daryā-ye Omān* (Tehran: Anjoman Asar Mafakher Farhangi,1996), 676–677.
88. Ibn al- Faqīh, *Kitāb*, 322–324.
89. See T. Zarcone, "Une route de sainteté islamique entre l'Asie centrale et l'Inde: La voie Ush-Kashghar-Srinagar," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 1–2 (1996): 236–246.
90. Wriggins, *The Silk Road*, 43.
91. S. C. Berkwitz, *South Asian Buddhism: A Survey* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 27.
92. P. R. Myer, "Bodhisattvas and Buddhas: Early Buddhist Images from Mathurā," *Artibus Asiae* 47/2 (1986): 133 (notes), 136.
93. James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*, translated into Persian by Ruqiya Behzadi, *Farhang-i Negārei-i Namād-hā dar Honar Sharq va Gharb* (Tehran: Farhang Moʻaser, 2004), 110.
94. G. Combaz, "L'évolution du stūpa en Asie: Contributions Nouvelles et vue d'ensemble," *Melanges chinois et buddhiques*. Bruxelles, vol. 3 1934–35, (Juillet 1935): 94.
95. Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches sur l'architecture de l'Iran bouddhique I," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam* 3(1975): 5–7.
96. Combaz, "L'évolution," 99; Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches," 33.
97. A. Lézine, "Trois Stupa de la Région de Caboul," *Artibus Asiae* 27/1–2 (1964): 5–48. See the magnificent old photographs of the stūpas at the end of the article.
98. Lézine, "Trois Stupa," 6–10.
99. Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches," 14–17, 21; see also Combaz, 136.
100. Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches," 10, 33.
101. *Gumbaz* is a word derived from Arabic *qubba* meaning a structure on a roof-like dome, see Zarcone, "Une route de sainteté," 245.
102. A. Pope, *Persian Architecture* (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1969 & 1976), 36; Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches," 19–21, Lézine, "Trois Stupa," 12–16.
103. T. Higuchi and G. Barnes, "Bamiyan: Buddhist Cave Temples in Afghanistan," *World Archaeology* 27/2 Buddhist Archaeology (October, 1995): 293.
104. Myer, "Stupas," 25.

105. Myer, "Stupas," 25.
106. Cf. H. G. Franz, "Ein unbekannter Stūpa der Sammlung Gai und die Entwicklung des Stūpa im Gebiet des alten Gandhāra," *ZDMG* 109 (1959): 132, 146–147.
107. Melikian-Chirvani, "L'évocation littéraire,"18.
108. Cf. B. A. Litvinsky and Zhang Guang-da, "Central Asia, the Crossroads of Civilization," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 3, edited by B. A. Litvinsky et al. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999), 490.
109. S. S. Blair, "The Mongol Capital of Sultāniyya, 'the Imperial,'" *IBIPS* 24 (1986): 113.
110. Varjāvand, "Emāmzāda ii," *Encyclopaedia Iranica.*
111. G. A. Pugachenkova, "Urban Development and Architecture: Part One, Transoxiana and Khurasan," in *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol. 4 part 2, edited by C. E. Bosworth and M. S. Asimov, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2003), 519–521.
112. L. Rempel, "The Mausoleum of Isma'il the Samanid," *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archeology* 4/4 (December, 1936): 204; see also Pope, *Persian Architecture*, 43; Pugachenkova, "Urban Development," 521.
113. Barthold, "Der Iranische Buddhismus," 30 .
114. Varjāvand, "Emāmazāda ii," *Encyclopaedia Iranica.*
115. F. B. Flood, "Ghūrid Architecture in the Indus Valley: The Tomb of Shaykh Sādan Shahīd," *Ars Orientalis* 31 (2001): 129–166.
116. A position that led the fundamentalist Wahhabis of the nineteenth century to launch attacks against the shrines and objects of veneration of the Shi'a Muslims of Iraq, particularly the mausoleum of the third Shi'i Imam Husayn.
117. H. Algar, "Emamzada i: Function and Devotional Practice," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* accessed July 2011, disagrees with Arjomand that Imamzada pilgrimage was a religious substitute for Mecca.
118. P. Granoff, "A Portable Buddhist Shrine from Central Asia," *Archives of the Asian Art* 22 (1968/1969): 80–95.
119. See M. A. Amir-Moezzi, "Icône et contemplation: Entre l'art populaire et le soufisme dans le shi'isme imamite (Aspects de l'imamologie doudécimaine XI)," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* V 20 (2010): 1.
120. Amir-Moezzi, "Icône," 3–4, 6.
121. Amir-Moezzi, "Icône," 8–9.
122. (The designation of 'Ali by the Prophet is known as Ghadīr Khumm.) See S.S. Blair, "The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993): 268. It is also interesting to see the Iranian influence on western Indian Jain painting, book illustration, and manuscript ornamentation, which appears in different periods: see A. C. Eastman, "Iranian Influences in Śvetāmbara Jaina Painting in the Early Western Indian Style," *JAOS* 63/2 (April-June, 1943): 93–113.
123. O. Grabar, "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad," *Studia Islamica* 96, Écriture, Calligraphie et Peinture (2003):19–38 and VI–IX. Mohammad's portrait has been asserted to have been influenced by the pre-Christian and even Christian-influenced iconography.
124. Almir Ibrić, *Islamisches Bilderverbot vom Mittel—bis ins Digitalzeitalter*, (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2006), 19, 27, 53.
125. *Alberuni's India*, vol. 1, translated and edited by Edward C. Sachau (London, 1910),111; F. Mujtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations* (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2008), 36, 44–46.
126. *Alberuni's India*, 111.

127. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, 72–73, 79–81, 96.
128. Varjāvand, "Emāmzāda ii." The paintings of Ashura events and other such paintings began to appear in shrines after the Safavid dynasty in the sixteenth century.
129. See Algar, "Emāmzāda i."
130. Melikian-Chirvani, "Recherches," 33.
131. Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary,* s.v. "lotus."
132. Algar, "Emāmzāda i."
133. Iqtidārī, *Āsār,* 509, 548–549, 561, 851.
134. Pope, *Persian Architecture*, 64.
135. B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran*: *Politik, Verwaltung und Kultur der Ilchanzeit 1220–1350,* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968), 191.
136. R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 253, the earliest surviving Islamic mausoleum is in Samara datable to the ninth century, 254.
137. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 254.
138. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 254–255.
139. Cf. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, 97.

7 Buddhism during the Mongol Period in Iran

1. C. R. Bawden, "Astrologie und Divination bei den Mongolen—die Schriftlichen Quellen," *ZDMG* 108 (1958): 317–337. The Mongols also developed a magical healing practice besides that of Tibetan Lamaism.
2. B. Spuler, *Die Mongolen in Iran: Politik, Verwaltung und Kultur der Ilchanzeit 1220–1350* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968), 178–179.
3. A. Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Iran,* vol. 5, edited by Harold Walter Bailey and Basil Gray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968 reprinted 2001), 538.
4. R. Amitai-Preiss, "Evidence for the Early Use of the Title īlkhān among the Mongols," *JRAS* 1/3 (November, 1991): 353–361. The title Il-Khan was in use toward the end of 1250s according to Hülegü's protocol to be used only for his successors.
5. J. Pfeiffer, "Reflections on a 'Double Rapprochement': Conversion to Islam Among the Mongol Elites during the Early Ilkhanate," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, edited by Linda Komaroff (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 371.
6. Bausani, "Religion under the Mogols," 540.
7. J. P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600–1800*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 182; see also R. Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate," *Journal of the Economic and the Social History of the Orient* 42/1 (1999): 39.
8. J. A. Boyle, "Rashīd al-Dīn: The First World Historian," *IBIPS* 9 (1971): 25.
9. J. Elverskog, "Ritual Theory across the Buddhist-Muslim Divide in Late Imperial China," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes* edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 298.
10. J. Aubin, "Émirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation," *Studia Iranica* 15 (1995): 43–44.
11. Pfeiffer, "Reflections," 374.
12. Spuler, *Die Mongolen,* 184–185.

13. R. Amitai-Preiss, "Ghazan, Islam and Mongol Tradition: A View From the Mamlūk Sultanate," *BSOAS* 59/1 (1996): 10.
14. Amitai-Preiss, "Ghazan, Islam," 1–3, 9. In general the Mongols have been perceived as not having acquired a deep knowledge of Islam, 6.
15. See Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shaman," 42.
16. Cf. Pfeiffer, "Reflections," 372.
17. Spuler, *Die Mongolen,* 180, 187.
18. Spuler, *Die Mongolen,* 191; K. Jahn, "Kamālashrī—Rashīd al-Dīn's 'Life and Teaching of Buddha,'A Source for the Buddhism of the Mongol Period," *Central Asiatic Journal* 2 (1956): 83.
19. H. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub* (Tehran, 1336/1957), 88 mentions that the population of Tabriz was mostly Shafi'i Sunni but there were many people from other sects and religions; we assume that in Mostaufī's time (thirteenth/fourteenth centuries) there were still Buddhists in Tabriz.
20. Boyle, "Rashīd al-Dīn," 20.
21. E. Esin, "Two Miniatures from the Collections of Topkapi," *Ars Orientalis* 5 (1963): 142.
22. David J. Roxburgh, "Persian Drawing, ca. 1400–1450: Material and Creative Procedures," *Muqarnas* 19 (2002): 50–51.
23. H. C. H., "A Fourteenth Century Persian Miniature," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 19/2 (February, 1932): 23–25, 31.
24. Cf. Esin, "Two Miniatures," 143–144, 147–150.
25. Roxburgh, "Persian Drawing," 52–54.
26. Pfeiffer, "Reflections," 383.
27. Spuler, *Die Mongolen,* 150.
28. See B. Hoffmann, *Waqf im mongolischen Iran: Rašīduddīns Sorge um Nachruhm und Seelenheil,* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000), 73–74.
29. Hāfīz Abru's historical work incorporates part of Bal'amī and Rashīd al-Dīn, borrowing from Nizām al-Din Shāmī's *Zafar Nāmeh* up to Timūr's death. See B. Spuler, *Persian Geography and Historiography* (Singapore: Pustaka National Pte Ltd, 2003), 131–133.
30. S. H. Nasr, *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, edited by Mehdi Aminrazavi (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), 232.
31. Jahn, "Kamālashrī," 82–83.
32. Jahn, "Kamālashrī," 84, 113, 120–121.
33. G. Schopen, "Hīnayāna Texts in a 14th Century Persian Chronicle: Notes on Some of Rashīd al-Dīn's Sources," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 26 (1982): 225–227.
34. Schopen, "Hīnayāna Texts," 228–230.
35. Jahn, "Kamālashrī," 120, 127.
36. Schopen, "Hīnayāna Texts," pp. 227, 234, 235.
37. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 102–103.
38. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 104–105.
39. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 111–116.
40. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 118–120, 123–125.
41. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 126–128.
42. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 130, 131–150.
43. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 146.
44. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 151–153.
45. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 154–159 (chapter 17).

46. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 163.
47. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh,* 162–163. Some Kushān Buddhist coins have been found at the Monastery of Dabra Dammo in Abyssinia (Ethiopia): see Bhattacharyya, "India's Contribution to Islamic Thought and Culture," 574.
48. Cf. T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 83–84 .
49. J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Ilchane* (Darmstadt, 1842), 47.
50. S. R. Canby, "Depictions of Buddha Shakyamuni in the *Jami' al-Tavarikh* and the *Majma' al-Tavarikh*," *Muqarnas* 10 (1993).
51. See the pictorial representation in, Sheila S. Blair and Jonathon M. Bloom, "The Mirage of Islamic Art: Reflections on the Study of an Unwieldly Field," *The Art Bulletin* 85/1 (2003): 176.
52. All instances are derived from Canby, "Depictions of the Buddha," 301–309.
53. G. M. Meredith-Owens, "Some Remarks on the Miniature in the Society's 'Jāmi' Al-Tawārīkh'," *JRAS* 2 (1970): 198, plate 2.
54. Canby, "Depictions of Buddha," 307–308; Meredith-Owens, "Some Remarks," 198.
55. Cf. Z. A. Ben-Dor, "Buddhism and Islam," *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia,* vol. 1, edited by Josef W. Meri (New York: Routledge, 2006), 119–120.
56. A. Pope, *Persian Architecture* (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1969 & 1976), 62; see also A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Buddhism: in Islamic Times," *Encyclopedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), 498. Although there is no record of where in the city this monastery was located, it could be the same structure that now is called *khalvat-gāh Shams Tabrīzī*: Shams was a wandering dervish, the spiritual guide of Rumī, and was originally from the city of Khoy.
57. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub*, 97.
58. Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub*, 60, 88.
59. Bausani, "Religion Under the Mongols," 541, 544.
60. Michael Dumper, Bruce E. Stanley, *Cities of the Middle East and North Africa: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), 58.
61. W. Ball, "Two Aspects of Iranian Buddhism," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute of Pahlavi University* 1–4 (1976): 141.
62. L. S. Diba, "Invested with Life: Wall Painting and Imagery before the Qajars," *Iranian Studies* 34/1–4 (2001): 10.
63. W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran,* translated by Svat Soucek, edited with an introduction by C. E. Bosworth, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 220.
64. G. Le Strange, *The Lands of Eastern Caliphate* (London, 1966), 193.
65. L. G. Potter, "Sufis and Sultans in Post-Mongol Iran," *Iranian Studies* 27/1–4 (1994): 78–79.
66. A. Wink, *Al-Hind- the Making of the Indo-Islamic World: The Salve Kings and the Islamic Conquest 11th–13th Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 350, quoting K. Jahn's Rashid al-Din's history of India.
67. Pfeiffer, "Reflections," 383.
68. Potter, "Sufis and Sultans," 100–102.
69. Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans," 39, 41.
70. Amitai-Preiss, "Sufis and Shamans," 41 quoting Rashid al-Din.
71. T. Zarcone, "Between Legend and History: About the 'Conversion' to Islam of Two Prominent Lamaists in the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries," in *Islam and*

Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 282–283, and A. Papas, "So Close to Samarkand, Lhasa: Sufi Hagiographies, Founder Myths and Sacred Space in Himalayan Islam," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 270–271; see also T. Zarcone, "Sufism from Central Asia among the Tibetan in the 16–17th Centuries," *The Tibet Journal* Autumn 20/3 (1996): 96–97.

72. Though this affinity between the Mongols and Sufism and proselytizing instrument of Sufism might be true, there is a disagreement that the role of Sufis in converting the pre-Mongol Turks has been exaggerated and propagated by Barthold; see J. Paul, " Islamizing Sufis in Pre-Mongol Central Asia," in *Islamisation de l'Asie centrale: Processus locaux d'acculturation du VII*[e] *au XI*[e] *siècle*, edited by Étienne de la Vaissière (Paris: *Studia Iranica*, Cahier 39, 2008), 297–317.
73. Cf. J. J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnānī*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 18.
74. Simnānī's father was apparently a tribal lord from the vicinity of Simnān. See Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 14.
75. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 20.
76. Amir I. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis* (Tehran: Entesharat Asatir, 1379/2000), 160.
77. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 131, 210.
78. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 33, 115.
79. D. F. Reynolds (ed.), *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 188.
80. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God,* 18.
81. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 131–136.
82. All instances from Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 131–136.
83. Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* 191.
84. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 119.
85. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 122.
86. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 145, 148.
87. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God,* 18 (notes).
88. Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self,* 191–192.
89. Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self,* 192.
90. Reynolds, *Interpreting the Self,* 193.
91. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 24–25; Pfeiffer, "Reflections," 381.
92. Here *māra* should not exactly be equated with the Islamic Satan (*shaytān* or *iblīs* as the counterpart of God) but rather as a psychological phenomenon.
93. Sīstānī, *Chihil Majlis,* 139–140.
94. C. Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *JRAS* 15/1 (April, 2005): 24–25.
95. I. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition 2002), 233; see also Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," 545.
96. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 18 (notes, quoting *Chihil Majlis*).
97. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, 27 (notes) one of these Sufis is believed to be Āmolī.
98. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies,* 233, believes that Kubrawi was founded by Simnānī although the sect is named after its alleged founder, Najm al-Din Kubra.
99. T. Lawson, "The Spiritual Journey in Kubrawi Sufism," in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam*, edited by Todd Lawson, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 364–366.
100. A. S. A. Hamadānī, *Asrār al-Nuqta*, translation and introduction by Mohammad Khājavī (Tehran: Mola Publications, 3rd edition, 1388/2010), xxi. Simnānī is

mentioned to be his maternal uncle, see A. H. Hamadani, "Life and Works of Sayyid Ali Hamadani," *Encyclopedic Survey of Islamic Culture*, edited by Mohamed Taher (Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1998), 111; see also Elias, "Sufism," 601.

101. Died in Kunar, Afghanistan, and buried in Khatlan in present-day Tajikistan.
102. See Y. Sikand, *Muslims in India: Contemporary Social and Political Discourses* (Delhi: Hope India Publications, 2006), 181.
103. Shridhar Kaul and H. N. Kaul, *Ladakh through the Ages: Towards a New Identity* (Delhi: M. L Gidwani Indus Publishing Company, 3rd edition, 2004), 118.
104. Hamadani, "Life and Works," 106–108.
105. S. Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nūrbakhshīya between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 249—in this book there is a whole chapter on Sufism in Baltistan and Ladakh. See also Kaul et al., *Ladakh through the Ages*, 118–119.
106. Zarcone, "Sufism from Central Asia," 96–114, see especially 96–97.
107. The city of Kargil, which lies between Leh (the provincial capital of Ladakh) and Srinagar (the provincial capital of Kashmir), was populated with the Shiʿi immigrants to such an extent that today the city is predominantly Shiʿi, whereas Leh is inhabited by both Buddhists and Muslims.
108. For an anthropological comparison of the Tibetan Buddhism and North African Sufism see G. Samuel, "Tibet as a Stateless Society and Some Islamic Parallels," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 41/2 (February, 1982): 222–227.
109. Hamadānī, *Asrār al-Nuqta*, 15–19, describes all spiritual issues symbolically by referring to *nuqta* (point), meaning the centerpiece of existence.
110. Hamadānī, *Asrār al-Nuqta*, 45–62.
111. Hamadānī, *Asrār al-Nuqta*, xxx–xxxi.
112. See J. Paul, "Influences indiennes sur la naqshbandiyya d'Asie centrale," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 1–2 (1996): 205, argues whether Buddhism was still influential in Central Asia at the time of rising Sufi sects such as Naqshbandi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
113. D. DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubravīyah in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies* 21/1–2 (1988): 53–55, 58–59, 83; for a Buddhist and Naqshbandī parallel see A. F. Buehler, "Sharī'at and ʿulamā in Ahmad Sirhindī's 'Collected Letters,'" *Die Welt des Islam*, 43/3 (2003): 314.
114. L. Lewisohn, "The Esoteric Christianity of Islam," *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*, edited by Loyd Ridgeon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 132; see also G. Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 229–230.
115. See L. Lewisohn, "An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part 1: The Ni'matullāhī Order: Persecution, Revival and Schism," *BSOAS* 61/3, (1998): 437–464, and L. Lewisohn, "An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part 2: A Socio-Cultural Profile of Sufism, from the Dhahabī Revival to the Present Day," *BSOAS* 62/1 (1999): 36–59.

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1. L. Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism: A History of Sufi-futuwwat in Iran* (New York & Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 31.
2. J. Chabbi, "Réflexions sur le Soufisme Iranien Primitif," *Journal Asiatique* 266 (1978): 41–42.

3. A. T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 67–68.
4. Chabbi, "Réflexions," 42, 44–45, 47.
5. Cf. B. N. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubishers, 1987), 89.
6. D. Scott, "Buddhism and Islam: Past to Present Encounters and Interfaith Lessons," *Numen* 42 (1995): 142–143.
7. F. B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 34; F. Mujtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations*, (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2008), 43.
8. C. E. Bosworth, "The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids," *IBIPS* 6 (1968): 38.
9. Mujtabai, *Hindu-Muslim*, 21, 23–24, 32, 46.
10. Birunī, *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya* (*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*), introduction, translated and edited by Edward Sachau (London, 1879), xiii.
11. S. Gaulier et al., *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia* (Leiden: E. J.Brill, 1976), 2–4.
12. Mujtabai, *Hindu-Muslim,* 56, 62; see also M. S. Khan, "A Twelfth-Century Arab Account of Indian Religions and Sects," *Arabica* 30, Fasc. 2 (Jun., 1983): 200.
13. Y. Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions," *JAOS* 95/2 (Apr.-Jun., 1975): 216. See also V. Minorsky, "Gardīzī on India," *Iranica Twenty Articles* (Publications of the University of Tehran, 1964), 202.
14. Abu Sa'id Gardīzī, *Zayn al-Akhbār* (Tehran, n.d.),286, 288–9; Minorsky, "Gardīzī on India," 208.
15. B. B. Lawrence, "Shahrastānī on Indian Idol Worship," *Studia Islamica* 38 (1973): 63–64.
16. Khan, "A Twelfth Century," 200.
17. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 2 (NY: Columbia University Press, 1970), 824.
18. R. N. Frye, *Bukhara: The Medieval Achievement* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 115.
19. Cf. I. Goldziher, "Kämpfe um die Stellung des Hadīt im Islam," *ZDMG* 61 (1907): 860–862.
20. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902), 351.
21. Goldziher, "Kämpfe," 864–865; see also J. Chabbi, "Remarques sur le dévelopment historique des mouvements ascétiques et mystiques au Khurasan: IIIe/IXe siècle – IVe/Xe siècle," *Studia Islamica* 46 (1977): 23.
22. See V. Tokatly, "The A'lām al-hadīth of al-Khattābī: A Commentary on al-Bukhārī's Sahīh or a Polemical Treatise?" *Studia Islamica* 92 (2001): 53–91. Al- Khattābī (d.998) wrote his criticism against al-Bukhārī's Sahīh when he was staying in Balkh. Analogous to al-Khattābī's work are those of the Ibn Qutayba and Ibn Furāq, see 87. See also C. Melchert, "Bukhārī and Early Hadith Criticism," *JAOS* 121/1 (January-March, 2001): 7–19.
23. J. Van Ess, "Jahm b. Safwān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. 2008, accessed April 2010.
24. F. Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam: Die Entwicklung zu al-Gazālīs Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktion der Philosophen* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 140.
25. W. M. Watt, "The Political Attitudes of Muʿtazilah," *JRAS* 1/2 (April, 1963): 40.

26. J. M. Pessagno, "The Murji'a, Īmān and Abū 'Ubayd," *JAOS* 95/3 (July-September, 1975): 385; see also A. K. Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal*, vol. 1, (Tehran, 1387/2008), 111–112.
27. Watt, "The Political Attitudes," 39–40; see also G. Vajda, "A propos de perpétuité de la rétribution d'outre-tombe en théologie musulmane," *Studia Islamica* 11 (1959): 29–30.
28. D. Gimaret, "Bouddha et les bouddhistes dans la tradition musulmane," *Journal Asiatique* 257 (1969): 300–301; see also S. Pines, "A Study of the Impact of Indian, Mainly Buddhist, Thought on Some Aspects of Kalām Doctrines," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam,* 17 (1994): 184, the core premise of Pines's article had already once appeared in Gimaret's article"Bouddha et les bouddhistes "; For *kalām*'s Indian origin see Van Ess, "Jahm b. Safwān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; for *kalām*'s extra-Islamic and Christian origin see Michael Cook, "The Origins of 'Kalām,'" *BSOAS* 43/1 (1980): 32–43; see also A. S. Tritton, "Foreign Influences on Muslim Theology," *BSOAS* 10/4 (1942): 837–842. Even the Muʿtazila of Iraq also seemed to have come somewhat under the influence of Buddhism. It is also important to note that in the *mutakallimun* (those who practiced the theology and art of *kalām*) circle in Basra where Wāsil ibn Atā (the founder of the Mu'tazila) and other Muʿtazili adherents, non-Arab and Arab Buddhists would meet. See Vajda, "Die Zindīqs im Gebiet des Islam zu Beginn der 'Abbasidenzeit," 434; see also Gimaret, "Bouddha et les bouddhistes dans la tradition musulmane," 313; Subut, "Buddha," 499.
29. Cf. C. Gilliot, "La théologie musulmane en Asie Centrale et au Khorasan," *Arabica* 49, Fasc. 2 (April, 2002): 136–138.
30. See W. Tucker, "Bayan b, Sam'an and the Bayaniyya: Shiʿite Extremists of Umayyad Iraq," *The Muslim World* LXV 4 (1975): 245.
31. Griffel, *Apostasie*, 139–142.
32. Gilliot, "L'exégèse," 129–164.
33. Cf. P. Gignoux, "Corps Osseux et Âme Osseuse: Essai sur le chamanisme dans l'Iran Ancien," *Journal Asiatique* 267 (1979): 42, 44, 79.
34. See M. Boyce, "On the Orthodoxy of Sasanian Zoroastrianism," *BSOAS* 59/1 (1996): 26–27.
35. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 60.
36. Various authors arbitrarily called many of the *hukamā'* and *zuhād* of Balkh and Tirmidh Sufis even though some had interest in Gnostic, Ikhwān as-Safā, or neo-Platonic, let alone Buddhist ones. Cf. B. Ratke, "Theologen und Mystiker in Hurāsān und Transoxanien," *ZDMG* 136 (1986): 551–559.
37. Th. Menzel, "Die ältesten türkischen Mystiker," *ZDMG* 79 (1925): 274, 276–277. A similar transference and Christianization of Buddhist practices and icons can be detected among the Christians who lived among the Buddhists of Central Asia, see L. Olschki, "The Crib of Christ and the Bowl of Buddha," *JAOS* 70/3 (July-September, 1950): 163–164.
38. See T. Zarcone, "Une route de sainteté islamique entre l'Asie centrale et l'Inde: La voie Ush-Kashghar-Srinagar," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 1–2 (1996): 233–236.
39. L. Kinberg, "What Is Meant by Zuhd," *Studia Islamica* 6 (1985): 27–28.
40. Kinberg, "What Is Meant," 40.
41. Chabbi, "Remarques," 24.
42. C. Melchert, "The Transition from Asceticism to Mysticism at the Middle of the Ninth Century C.E.," *Studia Islamica* 83 (1996): 70.

43. R. A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufiism, with a List of Definitions of the Terms "Sūfī" and "Tasawwuf," Arranged Chronologically," *JRAS* (April, 1906): 305.
44. Chabbi, "Remarques," 31; the whole book dedicated to Wāsitī is by L. Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret: Abu Bakr al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadi Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010).
45. Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 60–61.
46. Abdul Rahman Sulamī, "Notes About" *'Ādāb al-suhbata wa husn al-ashara',* discussed by M. Y. Qustar, *Abdul Rahman Sulamī,* vol.2 (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1388/2009), 36–37. Among those who accused Sulamī were Mohammad b. Yusuf Qattān, Ibn Jawzi; see also Abul 'Ala Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya wal suffiya wa ahl al-futuwwa*," vol.2, (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1388/2009), 391–392.
47. Sulamī, "Notes about *'Ādāb al-suhbata wa husn al-ashara*'" 36.
48. Abul-Qasim Qushayrī, *Risāla Qushayrīyya* (Tehran: Zavvar, 1387/2008), 86–87, 167–168, 173, 273–277, 345–349, 397–403, 489–501.
49. Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret,* 37–38.
50. Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya*," 339–340.
51. Sulamī, "Notes about *'Ādāb al-suhbata wa husn al-ashara*,'" 102–110.
52. *Abdul Rahman Sulamī*, "*Kitab al-futuwwa*," vol.2, edited by Ātash, Suleiman, vol. 2 (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1388/2009), 245, 252–253, 260, 264, 269, 275.
53. Sulamī's original text, *Ādāb al-suhbata wa husn al-ashara,* 62–63, 92, 120; see also *Sulamī*, "Notes About *'Ādāb*,'" 37–40.
54. Cf. Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya*," 397.
55. Chabbi, "Remarques," 13–14.
56. Cf. Melchert, "The Transition," 55, 58.
57. J. A. Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 25–26.
58. Cf. J. Van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra,* Band 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1990), 141–148.
59. Abul Hassan, Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub,* (Lahore Edition: Zaki Enterprises, 2002), 67–69, 183–184.
60. Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya*," 360, 366–7, 374, 378; A. H. Zarrinkoob, *Justeju dar Tasawwuf Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1369/1990), 335, 345,378–379; see also I. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen Über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), 168–169.
61. Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya*," 337, 345.
62. R. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 15.
63. See M. R. Shafī'i Kadkanī, *Qalandarīya dar Tārīkh* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1386/2007), 101, 109–111.
64. C. Melchert, "Sufis and Competing Movements in Nishapur," *IBIPS* 39 (2001): 240.
65. Karamustafa, *Sufis*, 65.
66. Afīfī, "*Al-Malamatiyya*," 338–339.
67. Zarrinkoob, *Justeju,*338,345.
68. J. Paul, "Solitude within Society: Early Khāwjagāni Attitude toward Spiritual and Social Life," *Sufism and Politics*, edited by Paul L. Heck (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 154.

69. Cf. Trumpp, "Einige Bemerkungen über den Sufismus," *ZDMG* 16 (1862): 243–244.
70. Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 86–87.
71. A. Qambar, "Some Differences between Arab and Persian Schools of Sufism," *Islam and the Modern Age* 14/4 (November, 1983): 259.
72. Browne, *A Literary History,* 301, 442–443.
73. R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, (London: Arkana Penguin Books, 1989), 18.
74. R. Dozy, *Essai sur l'Histoire de l'Islamisme* (Leyde/Paris, 1879), 314–315, 317, 339. See also M. Horten, *Indische Strömungen in der islamischen Mystik* (2 volumes), (Heidelberg, 1927–1928).
75. The original paper by Goldziher was in Hungarian, but a year later an excerpt appeared in an English translation by T. Duka, "The Influence of Buddhism upon Islam," *JRAS* (January 1904): 125–141. Goldziher, however, incorporated parts of his paper in his 1910 book of *Vorlesungen Über den Islam*.
76. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam,* 18–19.
77. S. Nafīcy, *Sar Cheshme-ye Tasawwuf dar Iran*, (Tehran: Foroughi, 1343/1964), 20–21, 32–35, 41, 55, 56–58. See also A. H. Zarrinkoob, "Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 3/3–4 (Summer-Autumn, 1970):146–147.
78. Martino M. Moreno, "Mistica musulmana e mistica indiana," *Annali Lateranensi* 10 (1946): 103–212.
79. R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960).
80. See C. Ernst, "The Islamization of Yoga in the 'Amrtakunda' Translations," *JRAS* 13/2 (July, 2003): 199–226. See also Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga," *JRAS* 15/1 (April, 2005): 15–43, 20–40; Ernst, "Two Versions of a Persian Text on Yoga and Cosmology, Attributed to Shaykh Muʿin al-Din Chishti," *Elixir* 2 (2006): 69–76/124–125; Ernst, "The Limits of Universalism in Islamic Thought: The Case of Indian Religions," *Muslim World* 101 (January, 2011): 10–14. See also G. A. Lipton, "Muhibb Allāh Ilāhābādī's Taswiya Contextualized," in *Muslim Cultures in Indo-Iranian World during the Early Modern and Modern Periods*, edited by Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 475–497.
81. D. Deák, "Śahādat or Śahā Datta? Locating the Mysterious Fakir in the Marathi Texts," in *Muslim Cultures in Indo-Iranian World during the Early Modern and Modern Periods,* edited by Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 501–532.
82. Scott, "Buddhism and Islam," 142.
83. Duka, "The Influences of Buddhism," 131.
84. T. Cleary, "Buddhism and Islam," *Transactions of the International Conference of Orientalists in Japan,* 27 (1982): 35–36.
85. R. Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 80, 72.
86. Scott, "Buddhism and Islam," 146, quoting Idries Shah.
87. F. ʿAttār, *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā* (Tehran: Entesharat Zavvar, 8th edition, 1374/1995), 222–223; see also Gramlich, *Alte Vorbilder des Sufitums* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996), 16–17. (This is a detailed scholarly account of Shaqīq, 13–62.) Ratke, "Theologen," 540, 542, 549.
88. ʿAttār, *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā,* 105–127.
89. R. A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, (New York, 1907), 232; see also F. Mojtabai, "Ibrahim ibn Adham," *Dā'erat ul-Mu'ārif Bozorg-i Islāmī,* vol. 2, (Tehran, 1368/1989), 404.

90. Hujwīrī, *The Kashf al-Mahjub*, 103–105; Qushayrī, *Risāla,* 100–101.
91. Mojtabai, "Ibrahim ibn Adham," 404.
92. All instances from ʿAttār, *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā*,105–127.
93. ʿAttār, *Taḏkirat ul-Aulīyā,* 127. Ending up in Sufi areas of Baghdad or Syria is a construction to link up the Khurāsāni ascetics with the Sufis of western territories.
94. A. H. Johns, "From Buddhism to Islam: An Interpretation of the Javanese Literature of the Transition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9/1 (Oct., 1966): 40–50.
95. S. H. Amin, *Bāztāb Ustoreh-i Buddha dar Iran va Islam* (Tehran: Entesharat Mir Kasra, 1378/1999), 128.
96. Oftentimes the Sufis insisted on keeping their teachings and practices a secret (*sirr*), away from the dogmatic religious people of their society. For this reason the Sufi *khānaqāh* was viewed with suspicion.
97. L. A. Waddell, "Rosaries in Ceylonese Buddhism," *JRAS* (July, 1896): 575–577.
98. Duka, "The Influences," 135; see also Moreno, "Mistica musulmana," 146–147.
99. See W. Doniger, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology* (London: Penguin, 1981), 12.
100. Qushayrī in his *al-Risāla* and Serraj in his *Kitāb al-Loma'* approve the practice of meditation, seeing what is veiled from the eyes, quoted by Moreno, "Mistica musulmana," 185–186; Qushayrī, *Risāla*, 345–349 (*morāqabeh*, meditation has another Persian idiom, *sar be jayb bordan*—"drawing one's head below," as in the poem of Sā'ib Tabrīzī).
101. See C. Ernst, "Sufism and Yoga According to Muhammad Ghawth," *Sufi* 29 (Spring 1996): 9; Ernst, "Situating Sufism," 24. See also Ernst, "Islamization of Yoga," 216–217; V. Bouillier, "Dialogue Entre les Nāth Yogīs et l'Islam," in *Muslim Cultures in Indo-Iranian World during the Early Modern and Modern Periods,* edited by Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 566.
102. J. Paul, "Influences indiennes sur la naqshbandiyya d'Asie centrale," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale* 1–2 (1996): 210–213.
103. J. Frembgen. *Derwische: Gelebter Sufismus* (Köln: Dumont Buchverlag, 1993), 152, 155–160; Goldziher, *Vorlesungen*, 153, 164–165; M. Fakhri, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 248; Duka, "The Influences," 140.
104. See A. Waley, "Did Buddha Die of Eating Pork?" *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* (1931–1932, Bruxelles, 1932): 343–354.
105. Zarrinkoob, *Justeju,* 375. Jalālī dervishes even composed a *Mathnawī* called *Tarāsh Nāmeh* (The Book of Shaving).
106. Cf. Shafī'i Kadkani, *Qalandariya*, 74, 104. Kadkani considers the shaving practice among the Qalandarīs was a Mazdaki and Sasanid custom. See also Zarrinkoob, *Justeju*, 375.
107. Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved? The Symbolism of Hair among Persian Qalandar Sufis," *Iran and the Caucasus* 14 (2010): 243, 248.
108. Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved?" 237.
109. Quoted by Zarrinkoob, *Justeju,* 363.
110. C. Tortel, *L'Ascète et le Bouffon: qalandars, vrai ou faux renonçants en islam ou l'Orient indianisé,* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2009), 30–31.
111. Tortel, *L'Ascète,* 86–88.
112. Ridgeon, "Shaggy or Shaved?" 242.
113. Cf. Scott, "Buddhism and Islam," 146–147.

114. The origin of the monastic robe goes back to the Buddha, who introduced it to the monks.
115. Paul, "Influences indiennes," 207–210.
116. M. Smith, "The Doctrine of Reincarnation in Persian Thought," *The Aryan Path* 14 (January, 1943): Bombay, 10.
117. A. Qaragozlu, *Omar Khayyam* (Tehran: Entesharate Tarhe Nou, 1381/2000), 12, 14, 20–21; see also S. Hedāyat, "Muqqadame-yee bar Rubā'īyyāt-i Khayyam," in *Neveshtehā-ye Farāmoush Shodeh-i Sādiq Hedāyat*, edited by Maryam Dānā'ī Boromand (Tehran,1376/1997), 58.
118. Suhravardī addressed the concept of reincarnation that came from Budāsef (the Buddha), see S. Suhravardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1377/1998), 344–345; see also S. Schmidtke, *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im Zwölferschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhuderts*, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 227–230; Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East*: *Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 73, 76–77.
119. Aziz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kashf ul-Haqāyiq* (Tehran, 1386/2007), 187–190, 221–222.
120. Astarābādī's writing about reincarnation and *unio mystica* sounded similar to certain Gnostic ideas, although many perceived him to be a Supreme Deity. See H. Ritter, "Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit, II. Die Anfänge der Hurūfīsekte," *Oriens* 7/1 (June 30, 1954): 1. Astarābādī was even perceived to be the reappearance of Hallāj, especially with his doctrinal book of *Jāvdān Nāmeh,* see Zarrinkoob, *Donbaleh Justeju dar Tasawwuf Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir 3rd edition, 1369/1990), 50, 56; Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "Jāvdān-Nāma," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2008, accessed April 2010; see also an earlier article by Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "Notes sur deux textes Hurūfī: Le Jāvdān-Nāma de Fadlallāh Astarābādī et l'un des ses Commentaires, le Mahram- Nāma de sayyid Ishāq," *Studia Iranica* Fasc. 2/35 (2006): 203–235. See also H. Algar, "Horufism" *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 2004; Browne, "Some Notes on the Literature and Doctrines of the Hurūfī Sect," *JRAS* (January, 1898): 61–94.
121. A. Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 77. For Nuqtavī's belief in physical reincarnation, see also A. M. Agha Mohammadi, *Mani: Manigary, Sufigary* (Tehran: Entesharat Farhad, 1384/2005.), 25, 83, 181–182, Amin, *Bāztāb,* 150–161.
122. K. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs* (The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2002), 6, quoting Iskandar Munshi.
123. V. Minorsky, *Notes Sur la Secte des Ahlé-Haqq* (Paris: Edition Ernest Leroux, 1922), 252–253.
124. Cf. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Breaking the Seal: The New Face of the Ahl-e Haqq," in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, edited by K. Kehl-Bodrogi et al. (Berlin 1995, Leiden: Brill, 1997), 180.
125. H. Halm, "Ahl-e Haqq," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1984, accessed in February 2010; see also Mir-Hosseini, "Inner Truth and Outer History: The Two Worlds of the Ahl-i Haqq of Kurdistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26/2 (May, 1994): 281.
126. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim*, 54.
127. W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*: *The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 196, 215.
128. Chittick, *The Sufi Path*, 174.
129. Cf. J. Campbell, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 25, 56.

130. A. Bausani, "Theism and Pantheism in Rumi," *Iranian Studies*1/1 (Winter, 1968): 8, 14, 18.
131. See S. Gilliat, "Islamic and Buddhist Doctrines of Personhood: Some Reflections for Interfaith Dialogue," *World Faiths Encounter* 6 (1993): 28–32.
132. A. S. Tritton, "Man, nafs, rūh, 'aql," *BSOAS* 34/3 (1971): 495.
133. See Nasafī, *Kashf ul-Haqāyiq*, 94–95, 97, 98, 114; see also Parviz Morewedge "The Logic of Emanation and Sūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part II," *JAOS* 92/1(January-March, 1972): 1–18.
134. A. B. Govinda, "Meditation on the Origination and Destruction of World," *The Maha Bodhi* 43/7 (July 1935): 397.
135. Govinda, "Meditation," 398–399.
136. Duka, "The Influence of Buddhism," 139. See also H. J. Kissiling, "Die Wunder der Derwische," *ZDMG* 107 (1957): 348–361. This article analyzes these extraordinary practices of the dervishes in the context of parapsychology. See also Ernst, "Situating Sufism," 33–34.
137. A. Papas, "So Close to Samarkand, Lhasa: Sufi Hagiographies, Founder Myths and Sacred Space in Himalayan Islam," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 270–271.
138. T. Zarcone, "Between Legend and History: About the 'Conversion' to Islam of Two Prominent Lamaists in the Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 282–283.
139. K. Morimoto, *Payvand-i Āeein-i Buddha va 'Irfān-i Islāmī* (Tehran, 1388/2009), 50–51. The magical powers and supraterrestrial dimensions of the Imams and the Prophet can be found in much of the Majlisī's *Bahār al-Anwār*.
140. For the Islamic (Shi'i) foundation of various Sufi orders in Iran, see R. Gramlich, *Die Schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens* (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner GMBH, 1976).
141. See Morimoto, *Payvand-i Āeein-i Buddha*, 27–44.
142. Jan Nattier, "Church Language and Vernacular Language in Central Asian Buddhism," *Numen* 37 Fasc. 2 (December, 1990): 201; see also Victor H. Mair, "Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53/3 (August, 1994): 707–751.

9 Jābir ibn Hayyān, Ibn Sīnā, and Mīr Fenderiskī: Any Buddhist Associations?

1. There is, however, a bulk of literature covering Jābir; each author gives a somewhat different account of his whereabouts, and the place of his birth and death.
2. M. L. Walter, "Jābir, The Buddhist Yogi II: 'Winds' and Immortality," *Journal of the Indian Philosophy* 24 (1996):159, referring to Holmyard "An Essay on Jābir Ibn Hayyān," *Studien zur Geschichte der Chemie*.
3. M. L. Walter, "Jābir, The Buddhist Yogi: Part I," *Journal of the Indian Philosophy* 20/4 (Dec. 1992): 425–427.
4. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol.2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 854 mentions Kufa as his place of birth; M. K. Friemuth, "Jabir ibn Hayyan," *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion*, edited by Ian Richard Netton

(London/NY: Routledge, 2006), 321, quoting H. Corbin, who believes Jābir died in Tūs.

5. F. Sezgin, "Das Problem des Ǧābir ibn Hayyān im Licht neue gefundener Handschriften," *ZDMG* 114 (1964): 257. Here the Mazdaki philosophy is mentioned as another potential source next to the Indian, 258. It is also asserted that both Jābir and Rāzī used the same sources for their chemistry, 267. For a follow-up article see M. Plessner, "Ǧābir ibn Hayyān und die Zeit der Entstehung der arabischen Ǧābir-Schriften," *ZDMG* 115 (1965): 23–35.
6. Friemuth, "Jabir," 321; P. Kraus, "Studien zu Jābir ibn Hayyān," *Isis* 15/1 (February, 1931): 7,14, 20; see also E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (New York: Dover Publication Inc. 1990), 73; Cf. Y. Marquet, "Quelles furent les relations entre 'Jābir ibn Hayyān' et les Ihwān as-Safā,'" *Studia Islamica* 64 (1986): 40–41, 47, 50; A. Hamdani, "An Early Fātimid Source on the Time and Authorship of the 'Rasā'il Ihwān al-Safā'," *Arabica* 26 Fasc. 1 (February, 1979): 73.
7. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,*vol.2, 854; Friemuth, "Jabir," 320.
8. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol.2, 854; Cf. S. N. Haq, *Names, Natures and Things: The Alchemist Jābir ibn Hayyān and his Kitāb al-Ahjār* (Netherland: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 16–18.
9. Kraus, "Studien," 22–24, 28–29. The association of Jābir with the Barmakī family (Khālid, Yahyā, and Ja'far) is mentioned in Jābir's *Kitāb al-Khawāss*: Holmyard, *Alchemy*, 70–71.
10. Cf. M. L. Walter, "Jabir, the Buddhist Yogi, Part III: Considerations on an International Yoga of Transformation," *Lungta* 16 (2003): 21–25, 31.
11. Walter, "Jābir, I," 426, 427, 429–431.
12. Walter, "Jābir, II," 145–147; see also Walter, "Jabir, III," 27, 29.
13. Walter, "Jābir, II," 148–153.
14. Walter, "Jābir, II," 154–156.
15. Kraus, "Studien," 18.
16. The village of Afshāneh near Bukhara has also been suggested as his birth place—a village 60 kilometers from Bukhārā in today's Uzbekistan that has a local tea shop and a museum holding various items of Ibn Sīnā (from the notes of my 1994 visit to Afshāneh). Afnan mentions that Afshāneh was where Avicenna's mother, Setāreh, came from: S. Afnan, *Avicenna: His Life and Work* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 20.
17. S. C. Inati, "Ibn Sīnā," *Encyclopedia of Islam and Muslim World*, vol. 1 (Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 337.
18. D. Gutas, "Avicenna ii: Biography," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* accessed in March 2010.
19. Afnan, *Avicenna,* 59.
20. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (London, 1902), 289; F. Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 1992), 212.
21. G. Lüling "Ein anderer Avicenna Kritik seiner Autobiographie und ihrer bisherigen Behandlung," *Deutscher Orientalistentag.* 3rd Supplement to the *ZDMG* 19 (1977): 496–513.
22. Gutas, "Avicenna ii."
23. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 500.
24. Afnan, *Avicenna,* 57.
25. Gutas, "Avicenna ii."
26. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 502.

27. C. Eliot, *Japanese Buddhism* (Surrey: Curzon Press Ltd., 1994), 225.
28. C. Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol.III (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2007), 19.
29. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 502.
30. A. M. Sayili, "Was Ibni Sina an Iranian or a Turk?" *Isis* 31/1 (November, 1939): 23–24.
31. Ibn Huwqal, *Kitāb Masālik wa Mamālik* (London, 1800), 304.
32. Sāmān is also the name of five villages in Īlām, Sāveh, Shahr-i Kord, Shāh Ābād, and Kirmān, all in Iran. See Papolī Yazdī, *Farhang Ābādī-hā va Makān-hāye Mazhabī Keshvar* (Tehran: 1388/2009), s.v "Sāmān"; Mostaufī, *Nodhat ul-Qulub,* 82–83 mentions one village called Sāmān in western Iran (in Iraq ʿAjam).
33. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 502–504.
34. P. Aalto, "On the Role of Central Asia in the Spread of Indian Cultural Influence," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, edited by Lokesh Chandra et al. (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), 251.
35. *The Fibrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 2, 824.
36. *Alberuni's India* (London, 1910), 21.
37. Lüling in his footnote 48 mentions that Sūmāniyya sounds like the Sanskrit word *Śramana*, which means "monk," 511.
38. D. Gimaret, "Bouddha et les bouddhistes dans la tradition musulmane," *Journal Asiatique* 257 (1969): 288–289.
39. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, translated from the Chinese of Hiuen-tsiang, 629 C.E. by Samuel Beal (Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Cooperation, 1969), 40.
40. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 504. (The year 999, Ibn Sīnā must have been 19 years old unless his date of birth is earlier than 980, a commonly accepted date.)
41. Afnan, *Avicenna*, 63–64.
42. Gutas, "Avicenna ii"*;* Lüling, "Ein anderer," 499.
43. Afnan, *Avicenna*, 75.
44. P. Morewedge, "The Logic of Emanation and Sūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part I," *JAOS* 91/4 (October-December, 1971): 469, 472–473. The influences of Zurvanism, Zoroastrianism, and Manichaeism on Ibn Sīnā has also been mentioned, see 472–474.
45. Cf. Lüling, "Ein anderer," 504.
46. G. F. Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's 'Essay on the Secret of Destiny,'" *BSOAS* 29/1 (1966): 39–40, quoting Ibn Sīnā's *Metaphysics*.
47. Quoting Ibn Sīnā's *Risāla fī sirr al-qadar*, Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's," 32, 33.
48. Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's," 40–41.
49. Hourani, "Ibn Sīnā's," 31, 43, 44.
50. See E. Meyer, "Philosophischer Gottesglaube: Ibn Sīnās Thronschrift," *ZDMG* 130 (1980): 226–277.
51. Cf P. Morewedge, "The Logic of Emanation and Sūfism in the Philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Part II," *JAOS* 92/1(January-March, 1972): 1–18; see also Morewedge, "Philosophical Analysis and Ibn Sīnā's 'Essence-Existence' Distinction," *JAOS* 92/3 (July-September,1972): 425–435.
52. A. M. Bogoutdinov, "A Notable Philosophical Production of the Tadjik People: Ibn Sina's Donish-Nameh," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 11/1 (September, 1950): 29–30.
53. R. Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 297.

54. There is an analytical discussion in *Abhidharma* about the relationship of the impersonal psychophysical aggregates and their breakdown into ultimate and the most infinitesimal units, an orderly classification that forms an edifice of knowledge relating to the ultimate realities.
55. Bogoutdinov, "A Notable Philosophical," 30, 34.
56. C. I. Beckwith, "The Sarvāstivādin Buddhist Scholastic Method in Medieval Islam and Tibet," in *Islam and Tibet—Interactions along the Musk Routes*, edited by Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011),169.
57. V. V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, translated from the Russian by V. and T. Minorsky, Volume II of Ulugh Beg Series (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 5; see also R. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 174–175.
58. Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture*, 175.
59. Beckwith, "The Sarvāstivādin," 172–173.
60. *Avicenna's Treatise on Logic*, Part One of *Danesh Name Alai*, edited and translated by Farhang Zabeeh, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 3.
61. Cf. S. Nafīcy, *Sar Cheshme-ye Tasawwuf dar Iran* (Tehran: Foroughi, 1343/1964), 41.
62. Mir Abu'l Qāsim Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, introduction and editing of bilingual edition of Persian and English by F. Mojatabai based on a PhD dissertation at Harvard University 1976, (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2006), 26–27.
63. S. H. Rizvi, "Mir Fendereski," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2005, accessed April 2010.
64. The original text is called *Laghu yoga vāsistha*.
65. J. Cole, "Iranian Culture and South Asia 1500–1900," in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, edited by Nikki Keddie and Rudi Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 22.
66. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 2–8.
67. Rizvi, "Mir Fendereski," Among these associates who settled in India were Hakim Dastur Isfahāni and Hakim Kāmrān Shirāzī.
68. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 3, 8; see also Cole, "Iranian Culture and South Asia," 23, quoting *Dabistān-i Madhāhib*.
69. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 11.
70. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 12.
71. P. D. Premasiri, "The Social Relevance of the Buddhist Nibbana Ideal," in *Buddhist Thought and Ritual*, edited by David J. Kalupahana (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001), 51.
72. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 15–19.
73. Similar attempts to unify religions had been made in India by Kabīr (d. 1518) and Guru Nānak (d. 1539).
74. Mir Findiriskī, *Muntakhab-i Jūg-basasht*, 21–24 (see also 42 in the English section of the same book).
75. For the translations of Hindu religious texts by Dārā Shokūh and other Muslims, see C. Ernst, "Muslim Studies of Hinduism? A Reconsideration of Arabic and Persian Translations from Indian Languages," *Iranian Studies* 36/2 (June, 2003): 184–187.
76. D. Shayegan, *Les Relations de l'Hindouisme et du Soufisme: Le Majma' al-Bahrayn,* translated from the French into Persian by Jamshid Arjomand under the title of *Āieen Hindu va 'Irfān-i Islāmī*, (Tehran: Farzan, 3rd edition, 1387/2008), 20.

77. See S. D'Onofrio, "A Persian Commentary to the Upaniṣads: Dārā Šikōh's 'Sirr-i Akbar'," in *Muslim Cultures in Indo-Iranian World during the Early Modern and Modern Periods,* edited by Denis Hermann and Fabrizio Speziale (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2010), 533–563.
78. Shayegan, *Les Relations*, 3, 9.
79. Shayegan, *Les Relations*, 25.
80. Y. Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views of Indian Religions," *JAOS* 95/2 (April-June, 1975): 217.
81. Cf Shayegan, *Les Relations,* 381–384.
82. H. Corbin, *Histoire de la Philosophie Islamique*, translated from the French into Persian by Seyyid Javād Tabātabā'ī titled *Tārikh-i Falsafeh Islami* (Tehran: IFRI, 3rd edition, 1380/2001), 480; see also Rizvi, "Reconsidering the Life of Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī (d. 1641): Notes towards an Intellectual Biography," *IBIPS* 40 (2002):184.
83. Afnan, *Avicenna*, 252.
84. Rizvi, "Mir Fendereski." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2005.

Appendix: Nonviolence and Rationalism: A Crypto-Buddhist Influence

1. See Dominique Urvoy, "La démystification de la religion dans les textes attribues à Ibn al-Muqaffa,'" in *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, edited by F. Niewöhner and O. Pluta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 92.
2. S. Stroumsa, "The Barāhima in Early Kalām," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985): 229–241; see also S. Stroumsa, "The Blinding Emerald: Ibn Rāwandī's Kitāb al-Zumurrud," *JAOS* 114/2 (April-June, 1994):166; Stroumsa, "From Muslim Heresy to Jewish-Muslim Polemics: Ibn Rāwandī's Kitāb al-Dāmigh," *JAOS* 107/4 (October-December, 1987): 767–772. This book of Ibn Rāwandī is a polemical work criticizing the contradictory verses of the Koran. See also R. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (New York, 1907), 375; M. Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 97.
3. Stroumsa, "The Barāhima," 239–240; see also Stroumsa, "The Blinding Emerald," 166 in particular; see also N. Calder, "The Barāhima: Literary Construct and Historical Reality," *BSOAS* 57/1(1994): 43, 46–8.
4. S. Stroumsa, "The Religion of the Freethinkers of Medieval Islam," in *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, edited by F. Niewöhner and O. Pluta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 46, 57.
5. M. S. Khan, "A Twelfth Century Arab Account of Indian Religions and Sects," *Arabica* 30, Fasc. 2 (June, 1983): 200.
6. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm,* vol. 1, 420–421; see also Nicholson, *A Literary*, 375; Fakhry, *A History*, 97.
7. For excerpts of *al-Qifrān* see Nicholson, *A Literary,* 316–320. See also Abul 'Alā Ma'arrī, *Risālat ul-Qifrān*, translated by Haidar Shoja'i (Tehran: Majd, 1379/2000).
8. Fakhry, *A History*, 107.
9. M. A. Badran, "denn die Vernunft ist ein Prophet—Zweifel bei Abū'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī," in *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, edited by F. Niewöhner and O. Pluta (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 75.
10. H. Daiber, "Rebellion gegen Gott: Formen atheistischen Denken im frühen Islam," in *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz

Verlag, 1999), 35–37; see also Fakhry, *A History*, 105, 106; see also O. Leaman, *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985/2002), 42.

11. An-Nazzām's religion was believed to be Manichaean, but Horten argues that he has been influenced by Stoic, Materialist, Platonic, and Aristotelian schools; see M. Horten, "Die Lehre von Kumūn bei Nazzām: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam," *ZDMG* 63 (1909): 774–792.
12. See J. Van Ess, " Ebn Rāvandī, Abu'l-Hosayn Ahmad," *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* 1997, accessed July 2010; C. Colpe, "Anpassung des manichäismus an den Islam (Abū Isā al-Warrāq)," in *Der Manichäismus*, edited by Geo Widengren (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlische Buchgessellschaft, 1977), 464–476; See also M. Watt, "Abū Isā Warrāq," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1983, accessed July 2010; S. Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rawandi, Abu Bakr al-Razi and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden/Boston/Koln: Brill, 1999); Stroumsa, "The Religion of the Freethinkers," 43–59.
13. I. Goldziher, "Abū-l-ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī als Freidenker," *ZDMG* 29 (1875): 637–641; for the German translation of selected poems of Abul ʿAlā see A. von Kremer, "Philosophische Gedichte des ʿAbū-l ʿalā' Maʿarrī," *ZDMG* 38 (1884): 40–52.
14. O. Rothfeld, *Umar Khayyam and His Age* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co. 1922), 64–65.
15. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 87.
16. J. A. Chawoshi, "Āyā Khayyam va Abul ʿAlā Maʿarrī Zandīq Budehand?" in *Nineteen Maqāleh dar bāreh Hakim Omar Khayyam Neishaburī* (Khurasan: Neishabur Shenasi, n.d.), 1–16.
17. Chawoshi, "Āyā Khayyam?" 6–7.
18. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom,* 99, 106–109.
19. Aminrazavi, *The Wine of Wisdom*, 107.
20. *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, translated by Avery and Heath-Stubbs (Penguin Books, 1981).
21. *The Ruba'iyat.*
22. Afnan, *Avicenna,* 203.
23. Fakhry, *A History*, 100,102–103.
24. Afnan, *Avicenna*, 34–35, 203–205; Fakhry, *A History*, 105–106.
25. Fakhry, *A History*, 106. Both of these works are mentioned by Birunī (found in Kraus *Epître de Béruni*).
26. Fakhry, *A History*, 106.
27. Stroumsa, "The Religion of the Freethinkers," 54–55.
28. F. Mujtabai, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Relations* (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 2008), 56, 62 quoting Birunī.
29. There was a group of heathen people in the Syrian and Mesopotamian regions who held on to their pagan beliefs even after the ninth century, when they began to call themselves Sabians in order to escape persecution.
30. A. H. Masʿudī, *Mūrūj ul-Dhahab*, vol.1 (Tehran, 1344/1965), 601; see also Khan, "A Twelfth Century," 202.
31. R. Webb, "The Early Spread and Influence of Buddhism in Western Asia," *Buddhist Studies Review* 10/1 (1993): 63–65; Masʿudī, *Mūrūj,* vol.1, 588.
32. M. A. Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Nihal*, vol.1 (Tehran, 1387/2008), 23,27, 57–8, 361–362; vol. 2, 10–82; see also Akbar Subut, "Buddha," *Dānishnāmeh Jahān-i Islam* (Tehran, 1377/1998), 501.

33. Afnan, *Avicenna*, 34.
34. Hedāyat has even gone so far as to scientifically and morally analyze the benefits of vegetarianism and name all the historical genius figures who were vegetarian in a short book, *Favā'ed Gīyāh-Khārī*, (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1342/1963).
35. Cyrus Shamisa, *Dāstān-e yek Ruh* (Tehran: Entesharate Ferdous, 6th edition, 1383/2004), 106–123.
36. Shamisa, *Dāstān-e yek Ruh*, 133–135.
37. See Navid Kermani, *Der Schrecken Gottes: Attar, Hiob und die metaphysische Revolte* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 2005).

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Glossary of Terminologies

Sanskrit-Pali

Ahimsā – Nonviolence, nonkilling
An-atma or *Anatta*– Nonpermanent self, nonself
Annicca – Impermanency
Atma – Unchanging and ultimate self
Bhikṣu – Buddhist monk ("beggar")
Bodhisattva – A person whose enlightenment benefits others
Bodhi – Insight, wakeful state
Citta – Thinking mind
Dharma – Buddhist teachings, the Way
Dukka – Unsatisfactoriness, trouble, unhappiness
Hindu – A broad religious and philosophical term introduced by the Muslims and the British as a simplification of the diverse religious sects and denominations within the Vedic Brahmanical system
Jātaka – Buddha's previous birth stories for cultivating wisdom
Karma – Actions and their consequences
Karunā – Compassion
Lobba – Greed
Mantra – Sacred chants and repetitive prayers
Maitreya – Messianic bodhisattva or future Buddha
Māra – Lord of ego and illusion
Moha – Confusion, delusion
Nīrvāna – Final liberation from ego and *samsāra;* extinguishing the flame of craving
Parīnīrvāna – Complete passing away without return
Pranayama – Breathing technique to extend the force of life
Sadhu – A Hindu ascetic mendicant and wanderer
Samsāra – Beginningless birth and death, the world of continuous becoming
Sangha – Buddhist community
Śramanā – Ascetic wanderer, Buddhist monk (*Shaman*)
Sri Pāda – Holy footprint
Stūpa – Buddhist structure or shrine housing a relic
Śunyāta – Emptiness
Sutra – Sermon or short teaching attributed to the Buddha
Tantra – Yogic practices and use of rituals
Vihāra or *vihār* – Buddhist monastery
Vipassanā – Insightful meditation

PERSIAN-ARABIC

Āhoo – Deer
'Aql – Intellect
Bahār – Buddhist monastery (Bactrian word), derived from Sanskrit *vihār*
Bakhshī (bhikṣu) – Buddhist monk
Bātin – Inner
Bī-khwīshī – Nonself
Bot – Buddha, idol
Bot-parast – Idol worshipper
Budāsef – Bodhisattva or the Buddha
Darvish or Dervish – Ascetic wanderer searching for the door (*dar*) to liberation
Dard – Pain, unsatisfactoriness
Dast-gīr – Lending a hand, referred to a spiritual guide
Faqr – Poverty, austerity
Faqīr – Austere ascetic, dervish
Fanā –Extinction of the conscious self, a state of nonself
Fānī – Impermanent
Hadīth – Short saying of Mohammad
Hajj – Pilgrimage to Mecca
Haqīqa – The truth
Hulūl – Incarnation
Hūrrīya – Spiritual liberation
Iblīs – Nonpersonified image of the devil
Imam – A direct descendant of 'Ali, the leader of the Shi'i community
Imāmzāda – Descendants of Shi'i Imams from the line of the Prophet
'Irfan – Gnosis, mysticism, or the knowledge of the Supreme
Ishrāq – Illumination
Kāfir – Unbeliever, pagan
Ka'ba – The square-structured House of God in Mecca
Kalām – Speculative/rational theology
Khalvat – Seclusion and solitude
Khānaqāh – Sufi fraternity center
Khirqa – Sufi robe, special mantle
Madrasa – Islamic college
Ma'rifa – Knowledge
Mi'rāj – Nocturnal spiritual journey of the Prophet
Mokāfāt-i bātinī – Internal retribution
Morāqaba – Meditation
Mūshrekīn – Polytheists
Mu'tazila – An early Islamic speculative school of theology with rational inquiry
Nafs – Desirous ego, lower self
Nawbahār – Buddhist monastery
Pīr – Sufi/Spiritual guide
Qadamgāh – Footprint shrine
Ruh – Psychic Soul
Shaman – Buddhist wanderer
Shamanīyya –Buddhism
Sharī'a – Islamic laws

Sufi – An Islamic mystic and ascetic (*suf* may be derived from the Arabic for *wool* due to Sufis wearing a woollen cloak, or perhaps derived from the Persian *sāf* or *safā* for *pure*)
Tanāsūkh – Transmigration of the soul
Tarīqa –Sufi path to knowledge
Tawāf – Circumambulation
'Ulamā – Islamic jurists, theologians
Ūmma – Islamic community
Vāsil – Mediator, referred to a spiritual guide
Zīyārat – Pilgrimage and circumambulation
Zāhir – Outer
Zindīq – Apostate (used to designate Manichaean followers)
Zikr – Sacred litanies
Zuhd – Asceticism

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